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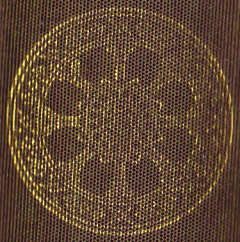
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GUIDANCE AND INSIGHT FROM THE BUDDHA

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya
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Chief Editor:
Most Venerable Phra Brahmapundit

Editor:
Peter Harvey

Translators:
Tamás Agócs
Peter Harvey
P.D. Premasiri
G.A Somaratne
Dharmacārī Śraddhāpa
Venerable Thích Tuệ Sỹ

Designed:
István Faragó

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Fax. +66 (035)24-8006

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BACKGROUND TO THIS BOOK, AND ITS CONTRIBUTORS

This book is a project of the International Council of Vesak, based at Mahachulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya University (MCU), Thailand, Vesak being the Buddhist festival celebrating the birth, enlightenment and final nirvana of the Buddha. The project's aim is to distribute this book for free around the world, especially in hotels, so as to make widely available the rich resources found in the texts of the main Buddhist traditions relating to fundamental issues facing human beings. Through this, its objectives are to increase awareness among Buddhists of their own rich heritage of religious and ethical thinking as well as to increase understanding among non-Buddhists of the fundamental values and principles of Buddhism. It seeks to strike a balance between what is common to the Buddhist traditions and the diversity of perspectives among them.

The book consists of selected translations from Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan, using a common terminology in English of key Buddhist terms, and maintaining strict scholarly standards. It is to be published first in English and then in the other official UN languages as well as other languages of Buddhist countries.

The Rector of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Most Venerable Professor Dr Phra Brahmapundit, is the guiding Chief Editor of the project, president of its advisory board, and MCU has provided the resources needed for the project.

The proposer and co-ordinator of the project is Cand.philol. Egil Lothe, President of the Buddhist Federation of Norway.

The editor and translators

P.H. **Peter Harvey**: Professor Emeritus of Buddhist Studies, University of Sunderland, U.K., co-founder of the U.K. Association for Buddhist Studies, editor of *Buddhist Studies Review*, and author of *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (2nd edn, Cambridge University Press, 2013) – editor of the text, and translator of some passages in The Life of the Historical Buddha and Theravāda sections. Meditation teacher in Samatha Trust tradition.

G.A.S. **G.A.Somaratne**: Assistant Professor, Centre of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, formerly Co-director of the Dhammachai Tipitaka Project (DTP) and Rector of the Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy (SIBA) – main translator of passages in The Life of the Historical Buddha and Theravāda Sangha sections.

P.D.P. **P.D.Premasiri**: Professor Emeritus of Pāli and Buddhist Studies, Department of Pāli and Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, co-founder of the Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy and President of Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy Sri Lanka – main translator of the passages in the Theravāda Dhamma sections.

T.T.S. **Most Venerable Thích Tuệ Sỹ**: Professor Emeritus of Buddhist

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Studies at Van Hanh University, Vietnam – translator of many of the passages in the Mahāyāna sections.

D.S. **Dharmacārī Śraddhāpa**: Graduate Researcher, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo, Norway – co-translator/translator of the passages in the Mahāyāna sections. Member of the Triratna Buddhist Order. He would like to thank Bhikṣuṇī Jianrong, Guttorm Gundersen, and Dr Antonia Ruppel for their invaluable advice and assistance with difficult points in the translation.

T.A. **Tamás Agócs**: Professor in Tibetan Studies, Dharma Gate Buddhist College, Budapest, Hungary – translator of the passages in the Vajrayāna sections.

Compiling Committee

Chair:
Venerable Dr Khammai Dhammasami,
Executive Secretary, International Association of Buddhist Universities; Trustee & Fellow, Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, University of Oxford, Professor, ITBMU, Myanmar.

Cand. philol. Egil Lothe,
President of the Buddhist Federation of Norway.

Prof. Dr Lê Mạnh Thát,
Deputy Rector for Academic Affairs, Vietnam Buddhist University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Ven. Prof. Dr Thích Nhật Từ,
Vice Rector, Vietnam Buddhist University, Ho Chi Minh City.

Ven. Prof. Dr Jinwol Lee,
Dongguk University, Republic of Korea.

Ven. Prof. Dr Yuanci,
Dean of Post-Graduate Studies, Buddhist Academy of China.

Prof. Dr B. Labh,
Head of Dept. of Buddhist Studies, University of Jammu. Co-founder and Secretary of the Indian Society for Buddhist Studies.

Prof. Dr D. Phillip Stanley,
Naropa University, USA, and Head of the Union Catalogue of Buddhist Texts of the International Association of Buddhist Universities.

Scott Wellenbach,
Senior Editor and Translator, Nalanda Translation Committee, Canada.

Most Ven. Prof. Dr Phra Rajapariyattakavi (Somjin Sammapanno),
Vice Rector for Academic Affairs of MCU.

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FOREWORD

Blessed is the arising of the fully self-awakened ones, Buddhas.
Blessed is their teaching of the middle path to peace.
Blessed is the understanding in the community who follow it.
Blessed is the dedicated practice of the harmonious community.
(*Dhammapada* verse 194)

The Buddhist festival of Vesak, marked by the full moon of the lunar month of Vesak, usually in May, celebrates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and passing into final nirvana at death (*parinibbāna*). In December 1999, the United Nations General Assembly recognised this as an international holiday, and this book may be considered as a development from this recognition. This appreciation spurred the Buddhist world to come together to celebrate Vesak, first in 2000 at the UN Headquarters in New York where the celebrations still take place annually, and from 2004 mostly in Bangkok, with an interruption of two years in Vietnam and one year in Sri Lanka. The coming together of the Buddhists from all over the world has led to the establishment of the International Council for the Day of Vesak (ICDV), now with the special consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The ICDV itself has brought together many Buddhist institutions of higher learning from more than twenty nations and helped to form the International Association of Buddhist Universities, IABU. Both the ICDV and the IABU have made possible regular collaboration between three main living traditions of Buddhism, Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, on study and practices. One of such joint effort is a project, launched in 2009 at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU), Thailand, to identify similarities among different Buddhist traditions on the one hand and on the other to celebrate the richness and diversity among them. This has resulted in the publication of this historic compilation: *Common Buddhist Text: Guidance and Insight from the Buddha.*

Encouraged by the UN General Assembly's resolution and inspired by the vision of Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhist leaders who produced some basic points unifying Buddhist schools in the First Congress of the World Buddhist Sangha Council (WBSSC) in Colombo in 1967, some twenty Buddhist scholars from all three Buddhist traditions selected from ten countries by the ICDV and IABU have undertaken this project. In the course of seven years, this compilation committee has conducted no less than twelve seminars at MCU to develop understanding and a concrete plan. Some 490 passages from the canonical texts and later treatises and commentaries of the three Buddhist traditions are selected to this text to present together what the Buddha taught. The text in your hand now has benefitted from two rounds of review by Buddhist leaders and scholars worldwide who have overwhelmingly approved both its style and substance.

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MCU, with the blessing of the Supreme Sangha Council of Thailand and support of the Royal Thai Government, has been privileged to have rendered necessary assistance from the outset. I hope the understanding developed in the compilation process of this important work will help different religious traditions, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, to strengthen harmony and peaceful coexistence as envisaged by the Buddha.

Most Venerable Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit
Chief Editor
The Rector of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
The President of International Council for Day of Vesak
The President of International Association of Buddhist Universities

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTIONS 1
General introduction 1
Introduction on the life of the historical Buddha 5
Introduction to the Sangha, or community of disciples 15
Introduction to the selections from Theravāda Buddhism 16
Introduction to the selections from Mahāyāna Buddhism 24
Introduction to the selections from Vajrayāna Buddhism 34

PART I: **THE BUDDHA** 41

CHAPTER 1: **THE LIFE OF THE HISTORICAL BUDDHA** 43
Conception, birth and early life: *passages L.1–6* 43
The quest for awakening: *L.7–9* 49
Attaining refined, formless states: *L.10–11* 52
The ascetic life of rigorous self-denial: *L.12–14* 55
The awakening and its aftermath: *L.15–19* 61
The achievements and nature of the Buddha: *L.20–24* 67
The Buddha as teacher: *L.25–35* 70
Praise of the Buddha: *L.36* 64
The Buddha's appearance and manner: *L37–39* 86
Taming and teaching those who resisted or threatened him: *L.40–45* 91
The Buddha's meditative life and praise for quietness and contentment: *L.46–48* 98
Physical ailments of the Buddha, and compassionate help for the sick: *L.49–54* 101
Sleeping and eating: *L.55–57* 105
Composing and enjoying poetry: *L.58–59* 107
The last months of the Buddha's life: *L.60–69* 109

CHAPTER 2: **DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE BUDDHA** .. 122
THERAVĀDA *Th.1–11*
Qualities of the Buddha: *Th.1* 122
The Buddha's relation to the Dhamma: *Th.2–4* 122
The nature of the Buddha: *Th.5* 123
The Buddha, his perfections built up in past lives as a *bodhisatta*, and his awakened disciples: *Th.6–9* 124
The status of the Buddha beyond his death: *Th.10–11* 127
MAHĀYĀNA *M.1–13*
Epithets and qualities of the Buddha: *M.1–4* 129
The nature of the Buddha: *M.5–8* 132
A Buddha's three 'bodies': *M.9–11* 136
The Buddha-nature: *M.12–13* 138

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VAJRAYĀNA V.1–6
The Buddha-nature: *V.1* 141
A Buddha's three 'bodies': *V.2* 143
The five Buddha families: *V.3–4* 144
The Buddha within: *V.5–6* 147

PART II: **THE DHAMMA/DHARMA** 151

CHAPTER 3: **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHINGS** 153
THERAVĀDA Th.12–28
The qualities of the Dhamma: *Th.12–13* 153
Reasons for choosing to practise Buddhism: *Th.14* 154
Attitudes to other religions: *Th.15* 154
Disputes and tolerance: *Th.16–20* 155
The teachings as having a practical focus: *Th.21–24* 160
The way to liberating knowledge: *Th.25–28* 162
MAHĀYĀNA M.14–22
Qualities of the Dharma: *M.14–16* 165
Reasons for choosing to practise Buddhism: *M.17* 168
Disputes and tolerance: *M.18–19* 169
The teachings as means to an end: *M.20–21* 170
The teachings are pitched at different levels, to attract all: *M.22* 170
VAJRAYĀNA V.7–11
The qualities of the Dharma: *V.7–9* 172
Concise expositions of the Dharma: *V.10–11* 174

CHAPTER 4: **ON SOCIETY AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS** 181
THERAVĀDA Th.29–54
Good governance: *Th.29–31* 181
Peace, violence and crime: *Th.32–36* 184
Wealth and economic activity: *Th.37–43* 189
Social equality: *Th.44–45* 193
The equality of men and women: *Th.46–48* 196
Good human relationships: *Th.49* 198
Parents and children: *Th.50* 200
Husband and wife: *Th.51–53* 201
Friendship: *Th.54* 202
MAHĀYĀNA M.23–38
Good governance: *M.23–25* 203
Peace, violence and crime: *M.26–29* 205
Wealth and economy: *M.30–31* 206
The equality of men and women: *M.32–33* 206
Respect for and gratitude to parents: *M.34–35* 207
Sharing karmic benefit with dead relatives *M.36–38* 210
VAJRAYĀNA V.12–13
Advice on compassionate royal policy: *V.12* 212
Reflection on the kindnesses of one's mother: *V.13* 216

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CHAPTER 5: **ON HUMAN LIFE** 222
THERAVĀDA *Th.55–78*
The cycle of rebirths (*saṃsāra*): *Th.55–58* 222
Precious human birth: *Th.59–61* 224
Our world in the context of the universe: *Th.62–63* 225
Karma: *Th.64–72* 226
The implications of karma and rebirth for attitudes to others: *Th.73–74* 234
This life and all rebirths entail ageing, sickness and death: *Th.75–78* 235
MAHĀYĀNA *M.39–45*
Our universe: *M.39* 239
Karma: *M.40–42* 240
Precious human birth: *M.43* 244
Impermanence: *M.44–45* 245
VAJRAYĀNA *V.14–23*
Precious human birth: *V.14–16* 246
The pains of *saṃsāra*: *V.17–23* 249

CHAPTER 6: **THE BUDDHIST PATH AND ITS PRACTICE** 258
THERAVĀDA *Th.79–101*
Individual responsibility and personal effort: *Th.79–84* 258
The need for virtuous and wise companions as spiritual friends: *Th.85–88* 259
The role and nature of faith: *Th.89–92* 261
Going for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha: *Th.93* .. 262
Devotional activities: *Th.94* 263
Chants on the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha that bring protection and blessing: *Th.95–96* 263
Ethical discipline, meditation, wisdom: *Th.97–98* 266
The noble eightfold path: the middle way of practice *Th.99–101* 268
MAHĀYĀNA *M.46–76*
Faith: *M.46–48* 270
Going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha: *M.49–55* . 272
Individual responsibility and personal effort: *M.56–57* 276
The middle way: *M.58–63* 277
The path of the *bodhisattva* as superior to those of the disciple and solitary-buddha: *M.64–67* 280
The need for a spiritual teacher: *M.68–70* 284
Developing the awakening-mind (*bodhi-citta*): *M.71–76* 287
VAJRAYĀNA *V.24–40*
Faith: *V.24–26* 291
Going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha: *V.27–29* .. 294
The spiritual teacher: *V.30–31* 295
Practising the middle way: *V.32* 296
The awakening-mind (*bodhi-citta*): *V.33–9* 298
Graded stages of the path: *V.40* 303

www.dhammadownload.com

CHAPTER 7: **ETHICS** 305
THERAVĀDA *Th.102–120*
Wholesome and unwholesome actions: *Th.102–104* 305
Generosity: *Th.105–109* 307
The precepts of ethical discipline: *Th.110–111* 309
Right livelihood, and extra precepts: *Th.112–113* 311
Loving kindness and patient acceptance: *Th.114–116* 312
Helping oneself and helping others: *Th.117–118* 314
Caring for animals and the environment: *Th.119–120* 315
MAHĀYĀNA *M.77–108*
The power of goodness: *M.77* 316
Generosity: *M.78–79* 317
The precepts of ethical discipline: *M.80–87* 318
Right livelihood, and extra precepts: *M.88–89* 321
Helping oneself and helping others: *M.90–94* 322
Teaching others: *M.95* 324
Care for animals and the environment: *M.96* 324
Loving kindness and compassion: *M.97–99* 325
The *bodhisattva* perfections: *M.100–106* 326
The *bodhisattva* vows and precepts: *M.107–108* 333
VAJRAYĀNA *V.41–54*
Wholesome and unwholesome actions: *V.41* 339
The perfection of generosity: *V.42–44* 339
The perfection of ethical discipline: *V.45–48* 341
The perfection of patient acceptance: *V.49–53* 344
The perfection of vigour: *V.54* 347

CHAPTER 8: **MEDITATION** 349
THERAVĀDA *Th.121–142*
The purpose of meditation: *Th.121–122* 349
The mind's negative underlying tendencies but also bright potential: *Th.123–124* 350
The five hindrances and other defilements: *Th.125–128* 351
The importance of attention: *Th.129–131* 354
Calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) meditations: *Th.132–133* 356
Recollection of the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and of the reality of death: *Th.134–135* 357
Meditation on the four limitless qualities: loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity: *Th.136–137* 358
The four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) as ways to cultivate insight (*vipassanā*) and calm (*samatha*): *Th.138* ... 359
Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*): *Th.139* 364
Meditative absorptions, higher knowledges and formless attainments: *Th.140–142* 367
MAHĀYĀNA *M.109–128*
Preparatory meditations: *M.109* 371
Not being attached to meditation: *M.110* 372
The radiant mind: *M.111–112* 372

www.dhammadownload.com

Meditation on loving kindness and compassion: *M.113* 373
Recollecting the Buddhas: *M.114* 374
Mindfulness: *M.115–116* 376
Calm (*śamatha*) meditation
and the four meditative absorptions: *M.117–120* 378
Insight (*vipaśyanā*) meditation: *M.121–123* 380
Chan/Zen meditation: *M.124–128* 383
VAJRAYĀNA *V.55–70*
Giving up distractions: *V.55–56* 389
Meditative concentration: *V.57* 391
Meditative antidotes for the various defilements: *V.58–64* 393
Meditation on the four limitless qualities: *V.65–68* 394
The four mindfulnesses: *V.69* 398
Meditation on the nature of mind: *V.70* 400

CHAPTER 9: **WISDOM** 403
THERAVĀDA *Th.143–179*
The nature of wisdom: *Th.143–148* 403
Suffering and the four Truths of the Noble Ones: *Th.149–155* ... 405
Dependent arising and how suffering originates: *Th.156–168* ... 410
Critical refledctions on the idea of a creator God: *Th.169* 417
The lack of a permanent, essential self: *Th.170–179* 419
MAHĀYĀNA *M.129–150*
The nature of wisdom: *M.129* 424
Dependent arising: *M.130–131* 425
Critical refledctions on the idea of a creator God: *M.132* 428
The lack of a permanent, essential self: *M.133–136* 430
Emptiness of inherent nature/inherent existence: *M.137–141* .. 433
Mind-only and emptiness of subject-object duality: *M.142–143* . 439
The Buddha-nature as a positive reality: *M.144–147* 442
The radical interrelationship of all: *M.148-150* 446
VAJRAYĀNA *V.71–76*
The three types of wisdom: *V.71–73* 450
Dependent arising: *V.74* 451
Insight into the lack of identity: *V.75–76* 454

CHAPTER 10: **THE GOALS OF BUDDHISM** 461
THERAVĀDA *Th.180–188*
Happiness in this and future lives 461
Definitive spiritual breakthroughs 461
Nirvana: *Th.180–188* 461
MAHĀYĀNA *M.151–159*
Happiness in this and future lives 466
Definitive spiritual breakthroughs 466
Nirvana: *M.151–155* 466
Buddhahood: *M.156–158* 472
Pure Lands: *M.159* 475

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VAJRAYĀNA V.77–83
Happiness in this and future lives: *V.77* 478
Definitive spiritual breakthroughs: *V.78* 478
Nirvana: *V.79* 479
Activities of the Buddha: *V.80–83* 480

PART III: **THE SANGHA OR SPIRITUAL 'COMMUNITY'** 483

CHAPTER 11: **MONASTIC AND LAY DISCIPLES AND NOBLE PERSONS** 485
THERAVĀDA Th.189–211
The Buddha's community of monastic and lay disciples: *Th.189–190* 485
The monastic Sangha: *Th.191–192* 486
Monastic discipline: *Th.193–198* 487
Types of noble disciples: *Th.199–204* 491
Arahants: *Th.205–211* 495
MAHĀYĀNA M.160–164
Lay and monastic *bodhisattvas*: *M.160–162* 498
Monastic discipline: *M.163–164* 499
VAJRAYĀNA V.85
Monastic life: *V.85* 501

CHAPTER 12: ***EXEMPLARY LIVES*** 505
THERAVĀDA Th.212–231
Great *arahant* monk disciples: *Th.212–219* 505
Great *arahant* nun disciples: *Th.220–225* 510
Great laymen and laywomen disciples: *Th.226–231* 515
MAHĀYĀNA M.165–168
Great monastic disciples: *M.165–167* 518
Great lay disciples: *M.168* 525
VAJRAYĀNA V.86–91
Great accomplished ones: *V.86–91* 527

APPENDIXES 537
Buddhanet's World Buddhist Directory 537
To hear some Buddhist chanting 537
Books on Buddhism 537
Printed translations and anthologies of translations 539
Web sources on Buddhism, including translations 553
Glossary of key Buddhist terms and names 555
Index 572

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INTRODUCTIONS

General introduction

1

This book offers a selection from a broad range of Buddhist texts. You will find here passages that may inspire, guide and challenge you. Overall, they give a picture of this great tradition as it has been lived down the centuries. Welcome!

You may be familiar with some aspects of Buddhism, or it may be quite new to you. It is generally included among the 'religions' of the world. This is not inappropriate, for while it is not a 'religion' in the sense of being focussed on a 'God' seen as the creator of the world, it does accept various kinds of spiritual beings, and emphasizes the potential in human beings for great spiritual transformation. As well as its 'religious' aspects, though, Buddhism has strong psychological, philosophical and ethical aspects.

Its aim is to understand the roots of human suffering, and to undermine and dissolve these, building on a bright potential for goodness that it sees as obscured by ingrained bad habits of thought, emotion and action. There is currently a surge of interest in the uses of 'mindfulness' – something central to Buddhism – in helping people to deal with such things as stress, recurrent depression, and ongoing physical pain. The UK National Health Service, for example, recommends mindfulness practice as a way to help depressed people from being drawn by negative thoughts back into another episode of depression (see Th.138 introduction).

Buddhist teachings talk a lot about suffering, which in the past has made some people see it as pessimistic. But the point of talking about suffering is to help one learn how to *overcome* it, through methods that help bring calm and joy, and a letting go of accumulated stresses. Any well-made image of the Buddha shows him with a gentle smile of calm repose.

The Buddha taught in a way that did not demand belief, but reflection and contemplation. It has its various teachings and doctrines, but most of all it is a set of *practices* that helps one:

— to behave in a more considerate and kindly way, for the true benefit and happiness of oneself and others,

— to learn to *nurture* more positive and helpful attitudes and states of mind, which bring calm, mental composure and inner strength, and to *recognize and let go* of the causes of stress,

— to develop a wiser understanding of the nature of life, including human limitations and human potential.

2 The age and influence of Buddhism

The history of Buddhism spans around 2,500 years from its origin in India with Siddhattha Gotama,[1] through its spread to most parts of Asia and, since the nineteenth century, to the West. Professor Richard Gombrich of Oxford University holds that the Buddha was 'one of the

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most brilliant and original thinkers of all time',[2] whose 'ideas should form part of the education of every child, the world over', which 'would make the world a more civilized place, both gentler and more intelligent' (p. 1), and with Buddhism, at least in numerical terms, as 'the greatest movement in the entire history of human ideas' (p. 194). While its fortunes have waxed and waned over the ages, over half the present world population live in areas where Buddhism is, or once was, a dominant cultural tradition.

3 Buddhism as containing different ways of exploring its unifying themes

In an ancient tradition, and one that lacks a central authority, it is not surprising that differences developed over time, which applied the Buddha's insights in a variety of ways. The different traditions developed in India, and then further evolved as Buddhism spread throughout Asia. In Buddhist history, while the different traditions engaged in critical debate, they were respectful of and influenced each other, so that physical conflict between them has been rare, and when it has occurred it has been mainly due to political factors.

This book contains teachings from the three main overall Buddhist traditions found in Asia. It seeks to particularly illustrate what they have in common but also to show their respective emphases and teachings.

4 The organization of this book

This book is divided into three main parts: i) the life and nature of the Buddha ii) the Dhamma/Dharma, or Buddhist teachings, and iii) the Sangha or spiritual community. Each chapter except the first is divided into three sections, containing selected passages from the texts of the three main Buddhist traditions: Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna.

Each of the passages is labelled with a letter to show what tradition it comes from – respectively ***Th.***, ***M.*** and ***V.*** – and a number, for ease of cross-referencing. Passages in the first chapter, on the life of the Buddha, are labelled with the letter ***L***. You can either browse and dip into the book where you like, or read it from the beginning. For referring back to material in the introductions, section numbers preceded by relevant letters are used: ***GI.*** for General introduction, ***LI.*** for Introduction on the life of the historical Buddha, ***SI.*** for Introduction to the Sangha, and ***ThI.***, ***MI.***, and ***VI.*** respectively for the Introductions to the selections from Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism. So, for example, ***MI.3*** refers to section 3 of the Mahāyāna introduction.

Note that, in the translations, where material is added within *round* brackets, this is for clarification of meaning. Where material is added within *square* brackets, this is to briefly summarise a section of the passage that has been omitted.

1 In Pāli, Siddhārtha Gautama in Sanskrit. Pāli and Sanskrit are two related ancient Indian languages, in which Buddhist texts were originally preserved. They belong to the same family of languages as Greek and Latin, and through these have a link to European languages.

2 *What the Buddha Thought*, London, Equinox, 2009, p.vii.

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5 The Buddha and Buddhas

The English term 'Buddhism' correctly indicates that the religion is characterized by a devotion to 'the Buddha', 'Buddhas' or 'Buddhahood'. 'Buddha' is not a proper name, but a descriptive title meaning 'Awakened One' or 'Enlightened One'. This implies that most people are seen, in a spiritual sense, as being asleep – unaware of how things really are. The person known as 'the Buddha' refers to the Buddha known to history, Gotama. From its earliest times, though, Buddhism has referred to other Buddhas who have lived on earth in distant past ages, or who will do so in the future; the Mahāyāna tradition also talks of many Buddhas currently existing in other parts of the universe. All such Buddhas, known as 'perfectly awakened Buddhas' (Pāli *sammā-sambuddha*s, Sanskrit[3] *samyak-sambuddha*), are nevertheless seen as occurring only rarely within the vast and ancient cosmos. More common are those who are 'buddhas' in a lesser sense, who have awakened to the nature of reality by practising in accordance with the guidance of a perfectly awakened Buddha such as Gotama. Vajrayāna Buddhism also recognizes certain humans as manifestations on earth of Buddhas of other world systems known as Buddha-lands.

As the term 'Buddha' does not exclusively refer to a unique individual, Gotama Buddha, Buddhism is less focussed on the person of its founder than is, for example, Christianity. The emphasis in Buddhism is on the *teachings* of the Buddha(s), and the 'awakening' or 'enlightenment' that these are seen to lead to. Nevertheless, Buddhists do show great reverence for Gotama as a supreme teacher and an exemplar of the ultimate goal that all Buddhists strive for, so that probably more images of him exist than of any other historical figure.

6 The Dhamma/Dharma

In its long history, Buddhism has used a variety of teachings and means to help people first develop a calmer, more integrated and compassionate personality, and then 'wake up' from restricting delusions: delusions which cause grasping and thus suffering for an individual and those they interact with.

The guide for this process of transformation has been the '*Dhamma*' (in Pāli, *Dharma* in Sanskrit): meaning the patterns of reality and cosmic law-orderliness discovered by the Buddha(s), Buddhist teachings, the Buddhist path of practice, and the goal of Buddhism: the timeless nirvana (Pāli *nibbāna,* Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*). Buddhism thus essentially consists of understanding, practising and realizing *Dhamma.*

7 The Sangha

The most important bearers of the Buddhist tradition have been the monks and nuns who make up the Buddhist *Saṅgha* or monastic 'Community'. From approximately a hundred years after the death of Gotama, certain differences arose in the Sangha, which gradually led to the development of a number of monastic fraternities, each following a slightly different monastic code, and to different schools

3 Generally abbreviated in this book as Skt.

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of thought. In some contexts, the term *saṅgha* refers to the 'Noble' Sangha of those, monastic or lay, who are fully or partially awakened.

8 The three main Buddhist traditions and their relationship

All branches of the monastic Sangha trace their ordination-line back to one or other of the early fraternities; but of the early schools of thought, only that which became known as the Theravāda has continued to this day. Its name indicates that it purports to follow the 'teaching' of the 'Elders' (Pāli *Thera*) of the council held soon after the death of the Buddha to preserve his teaching. While it has not remained static, it has kept close to what we know of the early teachings of Buddhism, and preserved their emphasis on attaining liberation by one's own efforts, using the Dhamma as guide.

Around the beginning of the Christian era, a movement evolved which led to a new style of Buddhism known as the Mahāyāna, or 'Great Vehicle'. The Mahāyāna puts more overt emphasis on compassion, a quality which is the heart of its '*bodhisattva* path' leading to complete Buddhahood for the sake of liberating countless sentient beings. The Mahāyāna also includes devotion to a number of figures whose worship can help people to transform themselves – holy saviour beings, more or less. It also offers a range of sophisticated philosophies, which extend the implications of the earlier teachings. In the course of time, in India and beyond, the Mahāyāna produced many schools of its own, such as Zen.

One Mahāyāna group which developed by the sixth century in India, is known as the Mantrayāna, or the '*Mantra* Vehicle'. It is mostly the same as the Mahāyāna in its doctrines, and uses many Mahāyāna texts, but developed a range of powerful new *practices* to attain the goals of the Mahāyāna, such as the meditative repetitions of sacred words of power (*mantra*) and visualization practices. It is characterised by the use of texts known as *tantras*, which concern complex systems of ritual, symbolism and meditation, and its form from the late seventh century is known as the Vajrayāna, or 'Vajra Vehicle'. Generally translated as 'diamond' or 'thunderbolt', the *vajra* is a symbol of the indestructibility and power of the awakened mind. 'Vajrayāna' is used in this work as a general term for the tradition which includes it as well as the elements of the Mahāyāna it emphasizes.

While Buddhism is now only a minority religion within the borders of modern India, its spread beyond India means that it is currently found in three areas in Asia:

— Southern Buddhism, where the Theravāda school is found, along with some elements incorporated from the Mahāyāna: Sri Lanka, and four lands of Southeast Asia – Thailand, Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos. It also has a minority presence in the far south of Vietnam, the Yunnan province of China (to the north of Laos), Malaysia, Indonesia, in parts of Bangladesh and India, and more recently in Nepal. In this book, it is referred to as 'Theravāda'.

— East Asian Buddhism, where the Chinese transmission of Mahāyāna Buddhism is found: China (including Taiwan) except for Tibetan and

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Mongolian areas, Vietnam, Korea, Japan. It also has a minority presence among people of Chinese background in Indonesia and Malaysia. In this book, it is simply referred to as 'Mahāyāna'.

— Central Asian Buddhism, also known as Northern Buddhism, where the Tibetan transmission of Buddhism, the heir of late Indian Buddhism, is found. Here the Mantrayāna/ Vajrayāna version of the Mahāyāna is the dominant form: Tibetan areas within contemporary China and India, and Tibetan and other areas in Nepal; Mongolia, Bhutan, parts of Russia (Buryatia and Kalmykia), and now with a resurgence of it among some in Indonesia. In this book, it is referred to as 'Vajrayāna', though it shares many central Mahāyāna ideas with East Asian Buddhism.

These can be seen as like the three main branches of a family. There are 'family resemblances' across all three branches, though certain features and forms are more typical of, and sometimes unique to, one of the three branches. Moreover, the 'family' is still expanding. Since the nineteenth century, with a large boost in the second half of the twentieth century, Buddhism has, in many of its Asian forms, also been spreading in Europe, the Americas, Australia and New Zealand, as well as being revived in India.

9 The number of Buddhists in the world

The number of Buddhists in the world is approximately as follows: Theravāda Buddhism, 150 million; East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism, roughly 360 million; Vajrayāna Buddhism 18 million. There are also around 7 million Buddhists outside Asia. This gives an overall total of around 535 million Buddhists. It should be noted though that, in East Asia, aspects of Buddhism are also drawn on by many more who do not identify themselves as exclusively 'Buddhist'.

Peter Harvey

Introduction on the life of the historical Buddha

The passages marked '*L.*' in this book concern the life of the Buddha. For the texts that these passages are drawn from, see the introduction on the Theravāda passages, below

1 The dates of the Buddha

Scholars are yet to come to an agreement on the exact dates of the historical Buddha. Indian culture has not been as concerned with recording precise dates as have Chinese or Graeco-Roman cultures, so datings cannot always be arrived at with accuracy. All sources agree that Gotama was eighty when he died (e.g. *Dīgha-nikāya* II.100), and the Sri Lankan chronicles, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa*, say that this was '218' years before the inauguration of the reign of the Buddhist emperor Asoka (Pāli, Sanskrit Aśoka): the 'long chronology'. The Theravāda tradition has seen Asoka's coronation as in 326 BCE, making the Buddha's dates 624–544 BCE. These dates have been traditionally accepted in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and were the basis

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for the celebrations of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's *parinibbāna* (Pāli, Skt *parinirvāṇa;* final nirvana, at death) in 1956/57 and the 2600th anniversary of his *sambuddhatva* (awakening/enlightenment) in 2011/12.

However, references in Asokan edicts to named Hellenistic kings have meant that modern scholars have put the inauguration at *c.* 268 BCE. Accordingly, some who accept the long chronology see the Buddha's dates as 566–486 BCE. Sanskrit sources preserved in Chinese and Tibetan have a 'short chronology', with the Buddha's death '100' years or so before Asoka's inauguration. If we then apply the Greek dating of Asoka's coronation, the Buddha's dates would be 448–368 BCE.

2 Background of the Buddha

Religion around this time in India was complex in character. It was made up of: local indigenous cults continued from the beliefs and practices of the Indus Valley religion (which went back to c. 2500 BCE); the dominant orthodox Brahmanism established and maintained by the brahmin priests (*brāhmaṇa*) of the Āryan people, and the various non-orthodox sects of renunciant ascetics and wandering philosophers known as *samaṇas* (Pāli, Skt *śramaṇa*; literally 'strivers', but here translated as 'renunciants'). The brahmins saw themselves as the highest class in society; and many but not all functioned as orthodox priests. They alone learned the body of sacred oral texts known as the *Veda*, the sacred scriptures of Brahmanism that were centred on sacrificial rituals to many gods; they knew its *mantras*, and could conduct sacrifices to the gods. The *samaṇas* rejected the authority of the *Veda*, and renounced family life and the ritual system associated with it in Brahmanism. They gave up normal work and social status to live from donated alms-food. Their wandering lifestyle made them dwell outside the villages in forest ashrams, places of spiritual striving, and formed unstable congregations around masters who propounded a diversity of teachings. Like the brahmins, their rivals, they received the respect from all classes, and their teachings were many and varied.

This period saw the establishment of new republics, kingdoms and empires, the development of cosmopolitan cities like Kapilavatthu, Rājagaha, Sāvatthī and Ujjenī, and the emergence of a new lifestyle organized around these urban centres. A large number of people living in these cities were either cut off from or dissatisfied with the old sources of worldviews. They were seeking new orientations to their religious concerns and there was much intellectual curiosity. Both the sages connected with Brahmanism, who expressed their ideas in symbolic and mystical texts known as *Upaniṣad*s, and their rivals the *samaṇas*, responded to this new situation by leading radical intellectual and religious movements.

In this context, in northern India, the son of a ruler gave up his worldly heritage and, after six long years of spiritual striving, convincingly declared himself the 'Buddha' of the age. It was he who introduced what has come to be known as Buddhism, a religion that was a middle way between a materialistic pursuit of sensual pleasures and a life of ascetic self-denial. It was neither focused on pleasing the gods

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through sacrifice, so ensuring a life rich in sensual pleasures, nor on pursuing the kind of extreme asceticism practised by some *samaṇa*s as a way to forcefully master the body and its desires.

3 The meaning of the term 'Buddha'

Originally, '*buddha*' was a concept among the *samaṇa*s, though by the time of the Buddha it had become accepted in the larger religio-philosophy of India. The Pāli and Sanskrit word *buddha* means 'awakened one' – awakened *from* the sleep of the deluding defilements, and awakened *to* the true nature of reality[4] – or 'enlightened one'. Its usage in Indian literature identifies a broad spectrum of persons, from the learned to those rare individuals who have achieved liberating insight. The Buddhist use of the term is in the latter sense, as referring to those exceptional selfless individuals who, with a direct penetration into the true nature of reality, have irrevocably reached release from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, along with its attendant pains.

Buddhists use the term *buddha* in a range of related senses:

— Its primary meaning is to refer to 'the Buddha', the founder of Buddhism, Siddhattha Gotama (Pāli, Skt Siddhārtha Gautama), also known as Sakyamuni (Pāli, Skt Śākyamuni), the sage of the Sakyan/Śākyan people. Following his awakening/enlightenment, he became a teacher, sharing with others what he had discovered for himself. As a discoverer and teacher of liberating truth, he was a *sammā-sambuddha* (Pāli, Skt *samyak-sambuddha*), a perfectly awakened Buddha, who attained his virtues and wisdom as the end-product of many past lives of spiritual striving. The term Buddha, on its own, typically refers to such perfectly awakened Buddhas. They teach the *Dhamma* (Pāli, Skt *Dharma*), a term which means something like the 'Basic Pattern' of things, and which in practice means a perfectly awakened Buddha's teachings, the nature of reality as seen by him, and the path he teaches.

— Other *sammā-sambuddha*s of previous and future eons, who likewise discover and teach the Dhamma at times when it is lost to human society.

— Awakened disciples of a *sammā-sambuddha*, who have, like them, attained release from the cycle of birth and death. These are *sāvaka-buddha*s (Pāli, Skt *śrāvaka-buddha*), disciple-awakened ones, also known as *arahant*s (Pāli, Skt *arhant*). The extent of their knowledge and powers is less than that of a *sammā-sambuddha*.

— Solitary-buddhas (Pāli *pacceka-buddha*, Skt *pratyeka-buddha*), who arise at a time when there is no *sammā-sambuddha* to teach the Dhamma. They develop the same level of liberating wisdom as them, but only teach others to a limited extent, not founding a new tradition of teaching Dhamma.

— In the Mahāyāna movement, which developed from the first century BCE, there is also the idea of *samyak-sambuddha*s of innumerable other world-systems spread throughout the vastness of the universe. Some are seen as in ordinary worlds similar to our own. Others are

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4 But not meaning 'awakened' in the sense of being a person who has experienced the awakening *of* some new quality or experience, which is yet to mature fully. A Buddha is a fully matured spiritual being.

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seen as in celestial Buddha-fields or Pure Lands, created by their presiding Buddha. It is held that these celestial Buddhas can be contacted in meditation, dreams and visions, and give teachings, and their devotees can seek rebirth in their realms.

— The celestial Buddhas are seen as able to produce recognized earthly incarnations, such as the Panchen Lama of Tibet.

The enlightened nature of a perfectly awakened Buddha, their Buddha-ness, is seen as identical with the highest reality, nirvana (Pāli *nibbāna*, Skt *nirvāṇa*), that which lies beyond all rebirth and the sufferings of the conditioned, temporal world. This identification perhaps caused the early Buddhist communities to use only impersonal and symbolic representation of the Buddha, and for several centuries discouraged composing a comprehensive biography of the founder. Over time, ideas about the nature of the Buddha and Buddhas have evolved, often leading to more elevated or refined ideas about the nature of Buddhahood.

4 Epithets of the Buddha

The Buddha's many qualities, as inspirations to faith in him, are expressed in a range of epithets applied to him. Some of these express particular human qualities such as his compassion, kindness, and wisdom. Some emphasize aspects of him that might otherwise remain unemphasized. Some refer to his lineage and name. Some reveal his extraordinary aspects and marvellous nature. Some epithets define the Buddha as having attained perfection in all domains. His wisdom is perfect, as are his physical form and manner. In some cases the epithets indicate that the Buddha was without equal. The superhuman aspect expressed in several epithets often has laid the foundation for deep devotion.

Among the many epithets, *buddha* was the favourite. Even hearing the word caused people to rejoice. The epithet *bhagavā*, 'blessed one'[5] or 'exalted one', conveys a sense of beneficent lordship in one full of good qualities. It is the most commonly used word referring to the Buddha in the canonical texts. The word *tathāgata*, 'thus come' or 'thus gone' (see L.20), has an aura of ambiguity and mystery, but implies the Buddha's attunement to the nature of reality (what is 'thus'). It is often used when the Buddha refers to himself or to awakened ones like him in general. The epithet *satthā deva-manussānaṃ*, 'teacher/guide of gods and humans', shows the Buddha as one who helped others to escape from the cycle of death and rebirth. He is like a leader who guides a caravan of travellers across a wilderness, getting them to reach a land of safety (representing nirvana). The epithet *anuttaro purisa-dammasārathi*, 'unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed', describes the Buddha's skills in taming those difficult to be tamed; his taming of the murderer Aṅgulimāla (L.45), and the elephant Nāḷāgiri (L.44) were often highlighted. *Sakya-muni*, sage of the Sakyans, refers to his human lineage. The epithet *mahā-purisa*, 'great man', whose body is endowed with thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics, expresses his extraordinary character and good qualities developed in past lives (L.38).

5 Pronounced as 'bless-ed one'.

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The epithets of the Buddha, in addition to having a central place in Buddhist devotion, are featured in the meditation known as the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati:* Th.134). This form of meditation, like all Buddhist meditational practices, aims at the training and purification of the mind. It is a technique of visualization, a way of recovering the image of the Buddha. Such visualization of the Buddha by contemplation of his epithets has been important in all Buddhist traditions.

5 The life of the Buddha

While there is debate over the Buddha's dates, there is no debate over his actual existence. This innovative and charismatic person, known as *samaṇa* Gotama (Pāli, Skt *śramaṇa* Gautama), wandered along the plains of the river Ganges in the north and north-eastern parts of India, leading a religious community consisting of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. Gotama was born in the Sakyan state as the son of an elder elected as its ruler. He later came to be seen as a 'prince', with his father as a 'king'. The state, whose capital was Kapilavatthu (Skt Kapilavastu), on the northern Gangetic plain just below the Himalayan foothills, in the region of the current Indian border with Nepal.

Scattered passages in the early texts focus on key events in his life. These were later woven together, embellished and added to in more sustained allegorical biographies, though even the early passages contain some wonders and marvels (such as in L.1). His father was Suddhodana (Skt Śuddhodana), ruler of a small state and Mahāmāyā was his mother (L.3–4). At the time of his conception, his mother dreamed of an auspicious white elephant entering her right side. When her time was approaching, while travelling to her relatives, she gave birth in the Lumbinī grove, while standing with her upstretched right hand on the branch of a tree. The newborn child miraculously stood up, strode seven paces and, declaring that this was his last birth, said he was destined for awakening (L.1). A few days later, Asita, an aged sage, examined the marks on the infant, and prophesied that he would become either a Buddha, if he chose to leave his father's palace and become a *samaṇa* (see L.2), or a *Cakkavatti* (Pal, Skt *Cakra-vartin*; Wheel-turner), a monarch ruling the whole of the known world.[6] The child was named Siddhattha, meaning 'one who has achieved his goal'.

Just days after, Siddhattha's mother died, so that her sister Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī brought him up, as his step-mother. When he came of age, his father, desiring to see his son become a great monarch, tried to prevent him from leaving the palace and becoming a *samaṇa*. He tied him down with sensual pleasures by constructing three palaces for him to live in luxury in the three seasons, by providing him with dancing girls and every delight a young man could desire (L.5–6), and by arranging his marriage to princess Yasodharā. In due course Yasodharā bore him a son, who was given the name Rāhula, Fetter (L.4).

In his twenties, he started to reflect on some of the stark truths of

6 *Jambudīpa*, a term roughly meaning the Indian sub-continent.

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life. In the later biographies, it is said that due to his father's constant care and over-protection, Siddhattha knew no sorrow, pain, or unhappiness, and saw no old age, disease or death. However, one day he went out for a chariot ride, which allowed him to see an aged man for the first time in his life. Shocked by the unanticipated scene, he asked his charioteer about old age, and came to know that it is the destiny of all humans. He returned to the palace right away, depressed, taking no relish in the gaiety and pleasure around him. On a second occasion, he saw a diseased man for the first time. He considered that people are foolish to thoughtlessly enjoy themselves under the constant threat of disease. On a third trip, he saw his first corpse; dismayed, he marvelled that people could forget the fear of death and live heedlessly. On a fourth occasion, he saw a calm, wandering *samaṇa*, and made up his mind to leave the home life and follow the lifestyle of this kind of renunciant religious seeker. Thus what in the early texts is presented as a reflective confrontation with the universal existential truths of ageing, sickness and death (L.5 and 7), becomes in the later texts a story of a sequential discovery of them.[7]

In the depth of night Gotama took a last look at his wife and newborn child.[8] He mounted his horse together with his charioteer, and rode out of the sleeping city. He removed his royal clothes and ornaments and arranged them to be taken back to his father. He cut off his hair and wore simple ascetic clothes. This was the great renunciation that took place when Gotama was twenty-nine years old (L.8).

In his search for peace, Gotama went first to Āḷāra Kālāma. The latter taught him the way to attain the meditative state of 'nothingness', a 'formless' state that transcended any sensory or material form (L.10). Gotama practised the method and quickly attained its goal. Āḷāra Kālāma offered to set him up as his equal and co-teacher. However, Gotama knew that the attained state was conditioned and limited, and led only to a refined rebirth, not escape from all rebirths. He turned down the offer and went away. Then he went to Uddaka Rāmaputta (son of Rāma), who taught him the way to attain the even subtler meditative state of 'neither-perception-nor-non-perception' (L.11). He mastered his teaching and attained its goal. At the end, he was acclaimed even Rāmaputta's teacher. However, he found that this attainment also did not reach to what he was seeking, the deathless nirvana beyond all rebirths, and so he left Rāmaputta.

Then Gotama went eastward to Uruvelā near Gayā, and found a pleasant spot suitable for striving. Having tried the above mystical body-transcending states, he now tried another of the available methods of spiritual striving: mortification of the body and its desires (L.12–13). He held his breath for long periods, fasted and came as close as he could to eating nothing at all. He became utterly emaciated. Seeing his incomparable striving, he was joined by five ascetics. He continued in this painful rough course for six long years, in time seeing that this

7 The story of seeing an old person etc. for the first time is based on a canonical account of the experiences of the past Buddha Vipassī (*Dīgha-nikāya* II.21–29).

8 Implying that his family did not know of his plan to become a renunciant; but in the canonical account in L.8, his parents knew of this and were upset by it.

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practice led him nowhere. He then wondered if there was another way.

At this point, he recollected an incident in his youth: when seated under a shading tree while his father was ploughing, his mind reached a joyful and calm meditative absorption known as the first *jhāna* (Pāli, Skt *dhyāna*). This recollection pointed him to a fruitful method (L.15). However, Gotama's body was too weak to practise and gain such a blissful experience, so he started taking solid food. Seeing him giving up his hard practice, the five ascetics left him in disgust.

Gotama had five dreams, assuring him that he would soon become a Buddha. The next day he sat under a sacred tree. Sujātā, a woman who had vowed to make a yearly offering to the deity of this tree if she bore a son, having had her wish fulfilled, prepared as offering a fine bowl of rice and milk. Her maid came upon Gotama sitting under the tree, and mistook him for the tree spirit. She reported the apparition to her mistress Sujātā, who rushed to the place and presented Gotama with the food. After taking the meal, Gotama sat under a tree which became known as the Bodhi-tree (Awakening-tree) in Gayā, facing east. He resolved not to arise until he attained awakening. Māra ('The Deadly'), a misguided deity intent on keeping beings within the round of rebirth and re-death, was alarmed at the prospect of Gotama's victory, that is, his escape from the realm of death. Māra came to assail him with an army of fearful demons. Gotama was protected by his accumulated good qualities and his love for living beings. After failing to shake him, the hosts of demons fled in defeat (L.14).

Māra then invoked his own magic power to try to overthrow Gotama. But Gotama invoked his own superior good qualities, amassed through many previous lives. Māra called on his retinue to witness *his* good qualities, so Gotama, having no other witness on his side, touched the earth with his right hand, calling the earth to testify to his moral and spiritual perfections. The earth quaked in response.

Then Māra, having failed with intimidation and compulsion, turned to temptation. He sent his three daughters, Desire, Delight, and Discontent, to seduce Gotama; but he remained as impervious to lust as he had to fear. Māra and his hosts then gave up and withdrew.

Later that full-moon night, Gotama attained the first *jhāna* again, and then three further *jhāna*s till he was in a state of profound equanimity, mindfulness and mental alertness. From this, he then attained to three higher knowledges (L.15). During the first watch of the night (evening), he acquired the first of these, remembering a countless number of his past lives. During the second watch (the hours around midnight) he acquired the divine eye, with which he surveyed the dying of other living beings, and how the nature of their rebirths depended on the moral quality of their karma, or intentional actions. During the third watch (late night), he acquired the third knowledge, that of the extinction of deep-rooted intoxicating inclinations (Th.128). He perceived the four Truths of the Noble Ones (usually called 'Noble Truths'), directly seeing that which is *dukkha* (painful and unsatisfactory), that which causes this, that which is its cessation (nirvana), and that which is the path leading to its cessation (detailed in L.27). His mind was free from intoxicating inclinations. The new day dawned on Gotama, now

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a Buddha (L.17). In response to this great event, it is said that the earth swayed, thunder rolled, rain fell from a cloudless sky, and blossoms fell from the heavens.

After attaining awakening, Gotama remained at the foot of the Bodhi-tree for seven days, contemplating dependent arising (see Th.156–168), the central principle of his teaching. Seeing the profundity of the realty that he had realized, and seeing that people were so engrossed in attachment, he was hesitant about teaching what he had found (L.25). But Sahampati ('Lord of our World'), a compassionate great Brahmā deity (and seen as taught by a past Buddha), saw his hesitation and rushed to him to plead that he should teach others. Seeing that some would understand his message, the Buddha decided to teach. He walked many miles to find the five former companions that he had practised asceticism with, in Varanasi[9] (L.26). With a discourse to them (L.27), the Buddha 'set the wheel of the Dhamma rolling', inaugurating the influence of his teachings. For the next forty-five years, he walked around north and north-east India converting men and women to follow the Dhamma. He established a monastic community of monks and nuns and a community of Buddhist laymen and laywomen. Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Ānanda, Anuruddha, Khemā, Uppalavaṇṇā were among his chief monastic disciples. Anāthapiṇḍika, King Pasenadi Kosala, Citta and Visākhā[10] were among his chief lay disciples.

At the age of 80, his lifespan came to end and he breathed his last, ending his teaching life. Since his awakening and experience of nirvana, he was without that which could lead to any rebirth. Now he attained final nirvana (Pāli *parinibbāna*, Skt *parinirvāṇa;* L.69). Henceforth gods and humans could no longer see him through his physical body, but only through his Dhamma-body, i.e. the collection of his teachings and the qualities these espoused (Th.2–4).

6 Early biographies of the Buddha

The early collections of Buddhist texts, such as the Pāli Canon, give priority to the Buddha's teachings, and so contain no full biography of him. However, material on episodes during his life are scattered throughout these texts, and the selections in the Life of the historical Buddha section of this book are examples of these. There are two main scholarly views on the formation of the Buddha-biography. One is that a basic ur-text of it existed in an early period, composed prior to King Asoka (c. 268–39 BCE). No longer extant now, it was complete only up to the conversion of the two great disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna. This Buddha-biography was composed as an introduction to the *Khandhaka*, a text on *vinaya* (monastic discipline) finalized at the second Buddhist council (roughly a century after the Buddha's death). Also included is an account of the Buddha's passing away, and of the first years of the formation of the monastic community. According to this first view, all subsequent Buddha-biographies have been derived from this basic ur-text.

9 Previously known in the West as Benares.

10 The above names are in Pāli; their Sanskrit forms are: Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, Ānanda, Aniruddha, Kṣemā, Utpalavarṇā, Anāthapiṇḍada, Prasenajit Kośala, Citta and Viśākhā.

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The other view is that there was a gradual development of biographical cycles, and these materials were later synthesized into a series of more complete biographies. According to this view, the earliest stages of the development of the Buddha biography are the fragments found in the *suttas* (discourses) and the *vinaya* texts. As can be seen from some selections in this book, they show no concern for chronology or continuity, and are simply narratives to help convey the message of the Buddha. The *suttas* emphasize stories of the Buddha's previous births, episodes leading up to the awakening, the awakening, and an account of his last journey, passing away, and funeral. The *vinaya* texts, on the other hand, focus on the Buddha as the shaper of the monastic community, and in addition to accounts of the events associated with his awakening, include narratives that describe the early days of his ministry, including an account of the conversion of his first disciples.

The *Mahāvastu*, *Lalitavistara*, *Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra*, *Buddhacarita*, and part of the *vinaya* of the Mūla-sarvāstivādins were the new autonomous biographies of the Buddha, compiled by various early Buddhist schools between the first and third centuries CE. They mainly follow the *vinaya* tradition where the story ends at a point soon after the Buddha had begun his ministry. These new autonomous biographies testify to three important changes that affected the traditions of Buddha-biography during the centuries immediately after King Asoka: the inclusion of new biographical elements drawn from non-Buddhist sources; the inclusion of stories about the Buddha's previous lives (*jātaka*) as a device for explicating details of his final life as Gotama; and an increasing emphasis on the superhuman and transcendent dimensions of the Buddha's nature. Whereas the Mahāyāna accepted the early autonomous biographies and supplemented them with additional episodes of their own, the Theravāda tradition displayed a continuing resistance to developments in the biographical tradition.

Two types of Buddha-biographies have had an important impact and role in the later history of the Theravāda tradition. One type is the *Nidānakathā*, a second or third century CE text that serves as an introduction to the *Jātaka* commentary. It traces the Buddha's career from the time of his birth as Sumedha, many lives ago, when he made his original vow to become a Buddha in front of the Buddha Dīpaṅkara, to the year following Gotama's awakening, when he took up residence in the Jetavana monastery. The other type is the biographical material included in Sri Lankan chronicles of Buddhism. These describe the Buddha's meditation-powered flights to the island, and then trace the influence which his two 'bodies' had on the island after his death. That is, they trace the bringing to the island of his physical relics, seen to contain something of his beneficent power, and his Dhamma-body, or collection of teachings. The first is a link back to the Buddha's physical body, the second links to his mind.

The selections in the Life of the historical Buddha chapter of this book are translations from the Pāli *suttas* and the *vinaya* texts on the life and the person of the Buddha. These selections include material on significant events in his life, and show something of his nature. The descriptions of his human as well as superhuman characteristics are expected

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to serve the reader for understanding the life and the person of that greatest selfless being who, wandering tirelessly along the Ganges valley in India, established Buddhism for the benefit of the world.

7 Some significant terms and names: *bodhisatta*, Māra and *brahmā*

Bodhisatta: prior to the Buddha's awakening, from the time of his vowing, in a long-past life, to become a Buddha, he is known as a *bodhisatta* (Pāli, Skt *bodhisattva*). This means a being destined to attain *Bodhi*, awakening.[11] As one commentary defines it,[12] a *bodhisatta* is one who is working towards awakening (*bujjhanaka-satto*), a being who is worthy of moving towards the realization of the perfect awakening (*sammā-sambodhiṃ gantuṃ arahā satto*). In the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions, the term *bodhisattva* is used for the ideal person, compassionately aiming to aid other beings, especially by attaining the perfect awakening that allows their skilful and wise guidance (see MI.2, below).

Māra: also known as 'Pāpimā', the 'Bad/Evil One', whose name echoes the Vedic *Pāpmā Mṛtyu*, 'Evil Death'. In Buddhism, one commentary says:[13] 'He is Māra since, in inciting beings (to do) that which is to their detriment, he kills (*māreti*) them'. So *māra* means 'death-bringing', 'deadly', and Māra is 'the Deadly One'. A misguided tempter-deity dwelling in the highest of the lower (sense-desire) heavens, he tries to weight people down by keeping them within his main scope of influence, the field of sensual pleasures. He is intent on encouraging both bad behaviour and even some religious behaviour, such as Brahmanic sacrifice, which keeps people entranced by the attractive aspects of the conditioned world, and hence bound to the realm of rebirth and re-death. He is a living embodiment of spiritual ignorance and the clinging attachment fed by it, who worked to hinder the Buddha in his efforts. Each inhabited region of the universe is said to have its Māra, and a Māra is not eternal, but is the current holder of a kind of cosmic position. As well as 'Māra' as the name of a tempter-deity, the term *māra* is also used to refer to other 'mortal' or 'deadly' things, namely anything impermanent and subject to death (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* III.189), and refers to the negative, *pāpa*, traits found in the human mind, that stifle its bright potential for awakening.

Brahmā: the higher deities are known as *brahmās*, and the most important of them is a Great Brahmā, with each world-system having one. In Brahmanism he is seen as creator of the world, but in Buddhism he is seen, like all unawakened beings, as within the round of rebirths and re-death, though he is endowed with great compassion. Buddhism also uses the term *brahmā* in the general sense of *seṭṭha*, 'supreme', and in this sense the Buddha is said to have 'become *brahmā*' (Th.4).

G.A. Somaratne
Peter Harvey

11 Sanskrit *sattva* means a 'being', and Pāli *satta* can mean the same, but may actually have derived from Sanskrit *sakta*, with *bodhi-sakta* meaning 'one bound to awakening'.

12 *Sutta-nipāta* commentary II.486.

13 *Udāna* commentary 325.

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Introduction to the Sangha, or community of disciples

1

The Buddha's disciples consisted of monks (Pāli *bhikkhu,* Skt *bhikṣu*), nuns (Pāli *bhikkhunī,* Skt *bhikṣuṇī*), laymen and laywomen. These groups are known as the four 'assemblies' (Pāli *parisā*, Skt *pariṣat*). The term *Saṅgha* (Skt *Saṃgha*) or 'Community' refers in its highest sense to the 'Noble' Sangha of those, monastic or lay, who are fully or partially awakened. Most typically, though, it refers to the community of monks and/or nuns, whose lifestyle is especially designed to support the path to awakening, with its supportive friendship being 'the whole of the holy life' (Th.86), and the monastic Sangha symbolises the Noble Sangha. 'Sangha' in its widest sense was also occasionally used of all the four 'assemblies' (*Aṅguttara-nikāya* II.8) – a sense which became not uncommon in Mahāyāna circles.

The terms *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī* literally mean 'almsman' and 'almswoman'. The original mendicancy of these, still current to varying extents, symbolized renunciation of normal worldly activities and involvements: this was an aid to humility, and also ensured against becoming isolated from the laity. It is said that the mutual giving of laypeople and monastics brings benefit to both (see Th.190). The often close lay–monastic relationship makes *bhikkhus* unlike most Christian 'monks'. They also differ from these in that their undertakings are not always taken for life, and in that they take no vow of obedience (though for their first five years, they live under dependence on a senior). The Buddha valued self-reliance, and left the monastic Sangha as a community of individuals sharing a life under the guidance of Dhamma and *Vinaya*. The job of its members is to strive for their own spiritual development, and use their knowledge and experience of Dhamma to guide others, when asked: not to act as an intermediary between God and humankind, or officiate at life-cycle rites. Nevertheless, in practice they have come to serve the laity in several priest-like ways.

2 Monastic rules

The life of monks and nuns is regulated by the *vinaya,* meaning 'that by which one is led out (from suffering)'. The main components of this section of scriptures are a code of training-rules (Pāli *pāṭimokkha*, Skt *prātimokṣa*) for monks, one for nuns, and ordinances for the smooth running of communal life and ceremonies. The *vinaya* drastically limits the indulgence of desires, and promotes a very self-controlled, calm way of life, of benefit to the monks and nuns themselves and an example which inspires confidence among laypeople. In some ways, it can be likened both to a code of professional conduct and one of sports training. The rules are not so much prohibitions as aids to spiritual training that require those observing them to be ever mindful. By constantly coming up against limiting boundaries, they are made more aware of their 'greed, hatred and delusion', and so are better able to deal with them.

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The early monastic fraternities developed different versions of the original code of perhaps 150 rules, though the codes agreed in substance and most of the details. Three are still in use, all dating from the pre-Mahāyāna period: the Theravāda code of 227 rules for monks (311 for nuns) is the one used by the Theravāda monastics of Southern Buddhism, the Mūla-Sarvāstivāda code of 258 rules for monks (366 for nuns) is used by the Vajrayāna monastics Northern Buddhism, while the Dharmaguptaka code of 250 rules for monks (348 for nuns) is used by the Mahāyāna monastics of Eastern Buddhism. An order of nuns following a full *vinaya* has survived in Eastern Buddhism, but died out in Southern Buddhism and was only introduced in a restricted form in Northern Buddhism. Since the late twentieth century, though, it has been re-introduced in Theravāda Sri Lanka and is being revived in Northern Buddhism. In the Buddha's discourses, when he is described as addressing himself to 'monks', it has been shown that he means all monastics, male and female.

The most serious monastic rules concern actions, which immediately and automatically 'entail defeat' (*pārājika)* in monastic life and permanent dismissal (see V.84): intentional sexual intercourse of any kind; theft of an object having some value; murder of a human being; and false claims, made to the laity, of having attained advanced spiritual states (a possible way of attracting more alms). As serious karmic consequences are seen to follow from a monk breaking these rules, it is held to be better to become a layperson, who can at least indulge in sexual intercourse, than live as a monk who is in danger of breaking the rule against this. The importance of celibacy – in the sense of total avoidance of sexual intercourse – is that sexual activity expresses quite strong attachment, uses energy which could otherwise be used more fruitfully, and generally leads to family responsibilities which leave less time for spiritual practice.

In the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, the monastic Sangha has remained important in most countries, though *bodhisattva* vows are taken by devout laypeople as well as by monks and nuns. In Japan, the celibate Sangha has mostly been replaced by a married priesthood since the late nineteenth century, and in the Vajrayāna, revered teachers (Skt *guru*, Tibetan *lama*) may be either monastics or married. Among a famous set of Vajrayāna teachers known as the *mahāsiddhas* ('great accomplished ones'), who lived from the eight to twelfth century, most were not monastics and many were of unconventional behaviour.

Peter Harvey

Introduction to the selections from Theravāda Buddhism

1

The passages marked '***Th.***' in this book represent the textual tradition of the Theravāda school of Buddhism. The canonical literature of the Theravāda school is preserved in the Pāli language, which in its present form cannot be entirely identified with any known ancient spoken

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language of India, although it has many linguistic characteristics common to the ancient Indo-Aryan group of languages, both literary and spoken, and has the principal linguistic characteristics of Middle Indian Prākrits. It was exclusively adopted by the Buddhists of the Theravāda school to preserve what they determined to be the word of the Buddha, and came to be known as 'Pāli', probably because it was the language of their most authoritative texts, as the word *pāli* means 'text' or 'scripture'. For Theravāda Buddhists, the Pāli Canon is considered the authoritative foundation for Buddhist doctrines as well as for the disciplinary rules and regulations adopted in the homeless mode of life of the community of monks and nuns who claim a Theravāda identity.

2 The content of the Pāli Canon

The Pāli Canon consists of three large collections or *piṭaka*s, literally 'baskets', and so is also known as the *Tipiṭaka* ('Three baskets'; in Skt, *Tripiṭaka*), a term also used by other early schools for their collection of texts. The contents of the Pāli Canon are:

— *Vinaya-piṭaka:* the collection on monastic discipline, primarily promulgated by the Buddha himself, with rules of individual discipline, and monastic regulations to ensure the sincerity of commitment to the goals of the community of monks and nuns, as well as to ensure harmonious community living so as to facilitate the achievement of these very goals of the holy life. It also contains a small amount of narrative material and teachings.

— *Sutta-piṭaka:* the collection of 'discourses', which gives the teachings of the Buddha and some of his leading disciples, delivered on a variety of occasions. It is organized into five *nikāya*s, or collections: the *Dīgha-nikāya,* or 'Long Collection' of 34 discourses (3 vols.); the *Majjhima-nikāya,* or 'Middle Length Collection' of 152 discourses (3 vols.); the *Saṃyutta-nikāya,* or 'Connected Collection' of 7,762 discourses, grouped in fifty-six sections (*saṃyutta*) according to subject matter (5 vols.); the *Aṅguttara-nikāya,* or 'Numerical Collection' of 9,550 discourses, grouped according to the number of items occurring in lists (from one to eleven) which the discourses deal with (5 vols.); the *Khuddaka-nikāya,* or 'Small Collection' of 15 miscellaneous texts in 20 volumes, many in verse form, which contain both some of the earliest and some of the latest material in the Canon. The 15 texts are: (a) the *Khuddaka-pāṭha,* a short collection of 'Little Readings' for recitation; (b) the *Dhammapada,* or 'Verses on Dhamma', a popular collection of 423 pithy verses of a largely ethical nature. Its popularity is reflected in the many times it has been translated into Western languages; (c) the *Udāna,* eighty short *sutta*s based on inspired 'Paeans of Joy'; (d) the *Itivuttaka,* or 'As it Was Said': 112 short *sutta*s; (e) the *Sutta-nipāta,* the 'Group of Discourses', a collection of 71 verse *sutta*s, including some possibly very early material such as the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga;* (f) the *Vimānavatthu,* 'Stories of the Mansions', on heavenly rebirths; (g) the *Petavatthu,* 'Stories of the Departed', on ghostly rebirths; (h) the *Theragāthā,* 'Elders' Verses', telling how a number of early monks attained arahantship; (i) the *Therīgāthā,* the same as (h), for nuns; (j) the *Jātaka,* a collection of 547 'Birth Stories' of previous lives of the Buddha, with the aim of illustrating points of morality and the heroic qualities of the developing *bodhisatta* – the full stories

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are told in the commentary, based on verses, which are canonical, and together they comprise 6 volumes – while this is a relatively late portion of the Canon, probably incorporating many Indian folk tales, it is extremely popular and is often used in sermons; (k) the *Niddesa*, an 'Exposition' on part of (e); (l) the *Paṭisambhidā-magga*, an *abhidhamma*-style analysis of certain points of doctrine (2 vols.); (m) the *Apadāna*, 'Stories of Actions and Their Results' on past and present lives of monks and nuns in (h) and i), with some brief material on the Buddha and solitary-buddhas); (n) *Buddha-vaṃsa*, 'Chronicle of the Buddhas', on 24 previous Buddhas; (o) the *Cariyā-piṭaka*, 'Basket of Conduct', on the conduct of Gotama in previous lives, building up the 'perfections' of a *bodhisatta* as he worked towards Buddhahood. The tradition in Burma/Myanmar also includes in the *Khuddaka-nikāya*: (p) the *Sutta-saṅgaha*, 'Compendium of Discourses'; (q and r) the *Peṭakopadesa*, 'Piṭaka Disclosure', and *Nettippakaraṇa*, 'The Guide', both attributed to Kaccāna Thera and aimed at commentary writers, (s) the *Milindapañha*, 'Milinda's Questions': discussions between King Milinda and Nāgasena Thera.

— *Abhidhamma-piṭaka:* the collection of 'Further teachings', is a scholastic literature which primarily extracts and systematizes the key teachings of the *sutta*s in terms of a detailed analysis of human experience into a set of *dhamma*s or impersonal basic processes, mental or physical. It consists of seven books out of which the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā* and *Yamaka* are devoted to the analysis and classification of *dhamma*s, the *Puggalapaññatti* to the categorization of character types according to ethical and spiritual qualities, and the last and most voluminous book, the *Paṭṭhāna*, to showing how the analysed and classified *dhamma*s condition each other's arising. The fifth book (*Kathāvatthu*), which deals with a refutation of non-Theravāda Buddhist views, is probably the latest addition to the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*. Unlike the *Sutta-piṭaka*, all the texts included in this *Piṭaka* assume a highly technical language and style.

The *Sutta-piṭaka* primarily consists of material also found in the collections of other early Buddhist schools, though its fifth *nikāya* contains some *abhidhamma*-like material (l) that is particular to the Theravāda school. The core of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* is shared with other *vinaya* collections. Most of the Th. passages in this book come from the *Sutta-piṭaka*. Apart from the canonical scriptures there is a vast body of commentarial and sub-commentarial Theravāda literature as well as other post-canonical doctrinal texts that developed in the Theravāda tradition. All the **L.** and **Th.** passages are translated from texts in the Pāli language.

3 The development of the Pāli and other early Canons

The *Vinaya-piṭaka* of the Theravāda canon gives an account of the first Buddhist council that gained official recognition in the history of Buddhism, in which the teachings of the Buddha (Dhamma) and the disciplinary rules and regulations laid down by him (*vinaya*) were agreed upon at an assembly of five hundred senior disciples of the Buddha, and communally recited. This council, held about three months after the passing away of the Buddha, may be considered as the most significant event in the scriptural history of Buddhism. The fact that such

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a council was held is accepted by all existing schools of Buddhism. However, the teachings of the Buddha could have been agreed upon, and to a considerable degree systematised, even before this officially recognized council. Such an observation is supported by the internal evidence in the Buddhist scriptural tradition that shows the early existence of some of the sections of the *Sutta-nipāta* of the Pāli Canon, and the reference in the *Saṅgīti Sutta* (*Dīgha-nikāya* III.210–11) to an attempt by the disciples of the Buddha to come together to agree upon an orderly classification of the Dhamma taught by the Buddha following a numerical method.

Originally, the agreed-on texts were in oral form, passed on by carefully organised communal chanting, as writing was little used in ancient India. The Pāli Canon was one of the earliest to be written down, this being in Sri Lanka in around 20 BCE, after which little, if any, new material was added to it. There also survive sections of six non-Theravāda early canons preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations, fragments of a Sanskrit canon still existing in Nepal, and odd texts in various languages of India and Central Asia found in Tibet, Central Asia, and Japan. The Pāli Canon which survives to the present day, as probably the most authoritative and complete ancient scripture of the Buddhist tradition, is a body of Buddhist literature that developed as a consequence of the agreements reached at the first council. Although bodies of canonical scripture were also preserved by other early Buddhist traditions, these now exist only in a few surviving texts in any Indian language, or more fully, but again incompletely, in Chinese and/or Tibetan translations.

Among the early Buddhist schools, an influential non-Theravāda one was the Sarvāstivāda, and recent studies have shown that their Sanskritised *sūtra/sutta* collection is closely comparable with the *Sutta-piṭaka* of the Pāli Canon. The original Sanskrit version of this canon was lost many centuries ago, and what remains of it today are only a few fragmentary manuscripts discovered recently through archaeological excavations. However, this alternative version, along with sections of other early collections, has been preserved in the Tibetan and especially Chinese languages from at least about the third or fourth centuries C.E., making it possible for modern researchers to engage in a serious comparative study of the different versions. The close similarity in the ideas and attitudes expressed in the *sutta*s preserved in the five *nikāya*s of the Pāli Canon and the *sūtra*s of the four *āgama*s (Chinese translations of parallels to the first four *nikāya*s) and other minor canonical texts of the Chinese and Tibetan Canons, shows that this *sutta/sūtra* literature belongs to an early period when Buddhism was undivided on sectarian lines. Many of the minor differences within and between canons can be seen to be due to the way in which oral traditions always produce several different permutations of essentially the same story or teachings. The *abhidhamma*s (Skt *abhidharma*) of the different Buddhist canonical traditions do not have the same degree of closeness and similarity in respect of doctrinal content. Therefore, it is reasonable to maintain that most of the Th. selections made to represent the teachings of the Buddha have a high probability of being attributable to the historical Buddha himself.

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Most of the teachings of the Pāli *suttas* are the common property of all Buddhist schools, being simply the teachings which the Theravādins preserved from the early common stock. While parts of the Pāli Canon clearly originated after the time of the Buddha, much must derive from his teachings. There is an overall harmony to the Canon, suggesting 'authorship' of its system of thought by one mind. As the Buddha taught for forty-five years, some signs of development in teachings may only reflect changes during this period.

4 Later Pāli texts

Of course, some later texts have been very influential on Theravāda Buddhists, and so a few passages from these have also been included to give a representative impression of the tradition. The most important of these are the *Milindapañha* ('Milinda's Questions'), included in the Pāli Canon by the Burmese tradition (item (s) above), and the *Visuddhimagga* ('Path of Purification'). The first purports to record conversations between a Buddhist monk and a king of Greek heritage in North-west India, Menander (*c.* 155–130 BCE), in which the monk answers the king's questions on key Buddhist concepts. The second is by Buddhaghosa, a fifth century CE commentator, and is a manual of meditation and doctrine that has had a shaping influence on later Theravāda thought and practice. The *jātaka* stories on past lives of the Buddha as a *bodhisatta* have verses which are canonical, but the full stories, much cited in sermons, are fleshed out in the commentaries.

Popular stories also come from the commentary to the *Dhammapada*. Its stories describe situations in which the Buddha taught and interacted with his disciples and struggling meditators. Although they are dated late for Theravāda texts – at around the sixth century BCE – they tell stories which would probably have been recounted for a long time. The *Dhammapada* verses that are associated with them are very early and we do not know at what stage their stories become linked with them. The tales are important, and have longstanding popularity amongst the laity, as they communicate a very human sympathy and engagement as meditators struggle, often over several lifetimes, with various problems and tendencies that bring unhappiness, but which in the end are overcome (see the story of the goldsmith's son in the introduction to L.33). The perspective of many lifetimes and the way the Buddha guides them on their individual meditative journeys demonstrate the way meditation practices were seen as carefully geared to specific individuals. The teacher and the meditator work together to find results, even after many apparent failures.

5 The selected passages and their sources

The **Th.** selections, drawn primarily from the Pāli Canon, represent not only the teachings of the Buddha meant for monastics who have renounced the world but also for the ordinary layperson who wishes to lead a happy, contented and harmonious life guided by ethical and religious ideals based on reason and empathetic awareness. They cover diverse aspects directly relevant to successful day-to-day living, such as a rational basis for moral action, principles for a sound social and po-

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litical culture, sound counsel pertaining to friendship and family life in the context of the life of laypeople, as well as instructions on meditation and wisdom relating to the cultivation of greater awareness and more skilful mental states, leading on to the attainment of what the Buddha's teachings regard as the highest goal and greatest good. Broadly speaking, Theravāda teachings concern: good and bad karma (intentional action) and the results these lead to in this and later rebirths; the practice-aspects of ethical discipline, meditation and wisdom; the four Truths of the Noble Ones (see L.27), usually called 'Noble Truths', on the painful, unsatisfactory aspects of life, what causes these, the transcending of these and their causes, and the noble eightfold path to this goal, nirvana.

The references indicated at the end of each **Th.** (and **L.**) passage are to editions of the texts by the UK-based the Pali Text Society (PTS; founded 1881) (http://www.palitext.com), which is the version most often referred to by Buddhist Studies scholars around the world.[14] The English translations of the selected Th. passages have benefited from many other existing translations of the canonical *sutta*s, but are not direct borrowings from them. An attempt has been made to provide original translations considered by the main author of this section to be the most appropriate. The book's editor, Peter Harvey, has also added some passages selected and translated by himself, to enhance the range of topics covered.

6 Key Theravāda ideas

One group of key Theravāda teachings come under the headings of rebirth and karma, as with other forms of Buddhism. Our short human life is seen as simply the most recent in a series of countless lives, without discernible beginning. In the past, we have sometimes been human, but sometimes been various kinds of long-lived yet mortal divine beings; together, these form the more pleasant, good rebirths. Sometimes, though, we have been in less pleasant, bad rebirths: as various kind of animals (including birds, fishes, or insects); as hungry ghosts, dominated by attachment and greed; or as hell-beings experiencing nightmarish existences for prolonged periods. Human rebirth is seen to bring more freedom of choice and the possibility of pursuing moral and spiritual development.

The specifics of our wandering from life to life are not seen as either random or determined by a God, but by the nature of our intentional action, or karma. Actions arising from greed, hatred or delusion are seen to sow seeds in the mind that naturally mature in unpleasant experiences in one of the lower rebirths (but beings in these have unexpended fruits of good actions, which will in time help them back to a good rebirth). Actions arising from generosity, kindness and wisdom are seen to sow seeds maturing in the more pleasant experiences of the human and divine realms.

The Buddha accepted many kinds of heavenly rebirths, populated by

14 Note that the Pali Text Society has two editions of volume I of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*; in this book, references to this are given to the pagination in the older edition, followed by the pagination in the newer one, shown in <> brackets.

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gods (*devas*). The beings of the first six heavens (listed near the end of L.27), like humans and beings of sub-human rebirths, belong to the realm of 'sensual desire' (*kāma*), where perception is coloured by sensual pleasures or their lack – these heavens are attained by practising generosity and ethical discipline. Then there are various heavens of the realm of elemental or pure 'form' (*rūpa*), in which things are perceived more clearly – these realms are reached by having attained meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). The beings of these levels are sometimes as a group referred to as *brahmās*, and the highest five of these heavens are the 'pure abodes', in which the only inhabitants are non-returner disciples, who are almost *arahants* (awakened beings) and the *arahants* that they then become (though most *arahants* live at the human level). Beyond all these heavens are the four worlds of the 'formless' (*arūpa*) realm, beyond perception of anything related to the five senses, and attained by deep meditative states of the same name as the heavens: the infinity of space, the infinity of consciousness, nothingness, and neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Yet all such lives sooner or later end in death, and further rebirths, according to the nature of one's actions. Sometimes the next rebirth is as good as or better than the last, sometimes worse. Hence one should not just aim for good future rebirths, but to transcend the cycle of lives – 'wandering on' (*saṃsāra*) in repeated birth and death – by the attainment of nirvana (Pāli *nibbāna*, Skt *nirvāṇa*). This brings in the next main heading of teachings: the four 'Truths of the Noble Ones'[15] (see L.27). These are four aspects of existence that the wise and spiritually ennobled are attuned to. The first is the physically and mentally painful aspects of life: its stresses, frustrations and limitations. The second is the craving, grasping and clinging that greatly add to the stresses of life, and drive one on to further rebirths, and their limitations. The third is nirvana, as that aspect of reality that lies beyond all such stresses as it is experienced through the cessation of such craving. The fourth is the path to this end of craving: the noble eightfold path, a way of happiness. The practice of this path is a gradual one that encompasses the cultivation of ethical discipline, meditation and wisdom, guided by the Buddha's teachings.

Most Theravāda Buddhists remain laypeople, but a significant minority become monks or nuns, with opportunities for a more sustained practice of the path, as well as being key preservers and teachers of the tradition.

People aim initially at a happier, more harmonious life, and good rebirths, but have as their highest goal nirvana: liberation from the round of rebirths. The stages to this consist of being a true disciple (*sāvaka*, literally 'hearer') of the noble one (the Buddha) or noble ones who attain the spiritual breakthroughs of becoming a stream-enterer (who has only seven more rebirths at most), a once-returner (whose future rebirths include only one more as a human or lower god), a non-returner (who has no more rebirths at lower than the level of the elemental form heavens), and then finally an *arahant* (who has no further

15 A more common, though somewhat misleading translation is 'Noble Truths'.

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rebirths). These four, with those firmly on the immediate path to each of these states, are the eight 'noble persons'.[16]

Besides these eight, the other noble persons are: a perfectly awakened Buddha (Pāli *sammā-sambuddha*) and a solitary-buddha (Pāli, *pacceka-buddha*, see LI.3, above). The first is, like Gotama Buddha, one who, when knowledge of the Dhamma had been lost to human society, rediscovers it and teaches it to others and establishes a community of disciples (*Majjhima-nikāya* III.8). The path to this is hugely long, over many many lives of building up spiritual perfections and inspired by meetings with past perfectly awakened Buddhas.

The solitary-buddha is one who, unlike an *arahant*, attains liberation without being taught by a perfectly awakened Buddha, also after a long path, but who teaches others only to small extent. Solitary-buddhas are described as 'without longing, who individually have come to right awakening' and as 'great seers who have attained final nirvana' (*Majjhima-nikāya* III.68–71). A person becomes a solitary-buddha by insight into impermanence and the folly of attachment, this arising from seeing such things as withered leaf falling, a mango tree ruined by greedy people, birds fighting over a piece of meat, and bulls fighting over a cow (*Jātaka* III.239, III.377, V.248).

Arahants are sometimes known as disciple-buddhas (Pāli *sāvaka-buddha*). They practise the teachings of a perfectly awakened Buddha so as to destroy their attachment, hatred and delusion and fully realize nirvana. They awaken to the same truths known by a perfectly awakened Buddha (see L.27), and usually teach others, but lack additional knowledges that a perfectly awakened Buddha has, such as an unlimited ability to remember past lives (*Visuddhimagga* 411). A perfectly awakened Buddha is himself described as an *arahant*, but is more than this alone.

A Theravāda verse commonly chanted as a blessing, from the *Mahājayamaṅgala Gāthā*, is: 'By the power obtained by all Buddhas and of solitary-buddhas, and by the glory of *arahants*, I secure a protection in all ways.' In his *Visuddhimagga* (I.33, p.13), the Theravāda commentator Buddhaghosa makes clear that the goal of being a perfectly awakened Buddha is a higher one than being an *arahant*: 'the virtue of the perfections established for the sake of the liberation of all beings is superior'. Mahāyāna traditions hold up perfectly awakened Buddhahood as the goal that all should seek, by compassionately taking the hugely-long path to this, as a *bodhisatta* (Pāli, Skt *bodhisattva*), so as to have the qualities of a great teacher. The Theravāda, though, sees perfect Buddhahood as a goal only for the heroic few. As the path to it is a very demanding one, it is not seen as appropriate (or even not compassionate) to expect most people to take it. The Theravāda sees it as best for people to aim for arahantship, and benefit from the teachings that the historical Buddha rediscovered and spent 45 years teaching. Nevertheless, a few Theravādins do see themselves as on the long *bodhisatta* path, with the focus of their practice being on compassionate help for others.

P.D. Premasiri
Peter Harvey

16 On which, see passage Th.201.

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Introduction to the selections from Mahāyāna Buddhism

1

The passages marked '**M.**' in this book represent the textual tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Unlike Theravāda, Mahāyāna does not represent one particular school or associated monastic fraternity. Rather, it is a broad movement encompassing many different schools and approaches, which developed expressions of the Buddha's teachings centred on compassion and wisdom. Mahāyāna *sūtras* began to gain popularity by the first century BCE. Its origin is not associated with any named individual, nor was it linked to only one early school or monastic fraternity, though the main one was the Mahā-sāṃghika. It arose in south-eastern India, spread to the south-west and finally to the north-west.

2 Key Mahāyāna features

Like all forms of Buddhism, the Mahāyāna includes teachings directed at those who seek temporary relief from the ordinary stresses of life: on how to live more calmly, considerately and harmoniously, this also being a way to generate beneficial karma leading to relatively pleasant rebirths. Ultimately, though, timeless happiness depends on going beyond all that is impermanent and conditioned. In Buddhism, some aim to become an *arhant* (Skt, Pāli *arahant*), one who has ended the attachment, hatred and delusion that lead to repeated rebirths and their ageing, sickness, death, and diverse mental pains. This is the main higher goal of Theravāda Buddhists. A few have aimed to become a solitary-buddha (Skt *pratyeka-buddha*, Pāli *pacceka-buddha*), a person with greater knowledge than an *arhant* (see LI.3, above), but of limited ability to teach others. Some aim to become a perfectly awakened Buddha (Skt *samyak-sambuddha,* Pāli *sammā-sambuddha),* a being with the ultimate knowledge, insight and means that can be used to compassionately guide countless other beings through his teachings and powers. This is the highest goal of Mahāyāna Buddhists.

Key features of the Mahāyāna outlook are:

— Compassion is the central motivating basis of the path: the compassionate urge to reduce the current suffering of others, encourage them to act in such a way as to reduce their future suffering, and aid them on the path to awakening/enlightenment so as to bring all their sufferings to an end. Compassion is the heart of the *bodhi-citta*, the 'awakening-mind', or aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the sake of others.

— *Bodhi-citta* arises from the renunciation of attachment to one's own happiness, and the wisdom that sees into the nature of reality.

— *Bodhi-citta* is enacted through the path of the *bodhi-sattva,* a being who is fully dedicated to attaining the awakening (*bodhi*) of a perfectly awakened Buddha. The path to developing a perfectly awakened Buddha's qualities is seen as much longer than the path to attaining awakening as an *arhant*, hence greater compassion is needed to take this long path, as well as being a key aspect of the enactment of this path.

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The path is one of developing six qualities to the level of complete 'perfections' (Skt *pāramitā*): generosity (*dāna*), ethical discipline (*śīla*), patient acceptance (*kṣānti*), vigour or diligence (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). Sometimes a further four perfections are added: skill in means (*upāya-kauśalya*), vow or determination (*praṇidhāna*), power (*bala*) and knowledge (*jñāna*), and each of the ten qualities is seen as respectively brought to fullness in ten levels or stages (*bhūmi*) that are then followed by the attainment of Buddhahood.

— The *bodhisattva* in the eighth stage of the long ten-stage path to Buddhahood is seen to realize nirvana as an *arhant* does, in which all defilements are completely eliminated so that a person is no longer bound to future rebirths. However, the Mahāyāna holds that this is not the ultimate nirvana, and that there is still spiritual work to do. The advanced *bodhisattva* has a deep non-attachment to the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), and this allows further progress to true, ultimate nirvana, realized exclusively by a Buddha with unsurpassed perfect awakening.

— *Bodhisattvas* can be at various levels along the path: monks, nuns and laypeople of various levels of spiritual development, some who have reached at least the first of the ten stages, which pertain to *bodhisattvas* of a spiritually 'noble' level, as they have had some direct insight into the nature of reality, in what is called the 'path of seeing' (*darśaṇa-mārga*). *Bodhisattvas* at the higher stages of the noble path are transcendent beings associated with Buddhas from other worlds; they are saviour-beings who may be called on for help by devotees.

— The Mahāyāna has a new cosmology arising from visualization practices devoutly directed at one or other Buddha as a glorified, transcendent being. Many such Buddhas besides Śākyamuni are seen to exist.

— The Mahāyāna developed several sophisticated philosophies, on which see below.

The call to the *bodhisattva* path to perfectly awakened Buddhahood is inspired by the vision that the huge universe will always be in need of such Buddhas. The person entering this path aspires to be a compassionate, self-sacrificing, valiant person. Their path will be long, as they will need to build up moral and spiritual perfections not only for their own exalted state of Buddhahood, but also so as to be able altruistically to help liberate other beings, 'ferrying them out of the ocean of re-birth and re-death' by teaching, good deeds, transference of karmic benefit, and offering response to prayer. While compassion has always been an important part of the Buddhist path, in the Mahāyāna it is more strongly emphasized, as the motivating factor for the whole *bodhisattva* path, and the heart of the *bodhi-citta*, or 'awakening-mind'.

3 The nature of the Mahāyāna and its attitude to other types of Buddhism

The Mahāyāna perspective is critical of Buddhists who are concerned only with their own liberation from the suffering of this and later lives, neglecting the liberation of others. The emphasis is on what is seen as the true spirit of the Buddha's teachings, and its texts seek to express this in ways unrestricted by formal adherence to only the letter of

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what the Buddha is said to have taught. They are directed at what the Buddha pointed to, rather than the words he used to do this – at the 'moon' rather than the pointing 'finger'. Hence the Mahāyāna has many *sūtras* unknown to earlier Buddhist traditions, with teachings whose gradual systematization established it as a movement with an identity of its own.

At first, the new movement was called the *Bodhisattva-yāna,* or '(Spiritual) Vehicle of the *Bodhisattva*'. This was in contradistinction to the 'Vehicle of the Disciple' (*Śrāvaka-yāna*) and 'Vehicle of the Solitary-buddha' (*Pratyeka-buddha-yāna*), whose followers respectively aimed to become *arhants* and *pratyeka-buddhas*. As the new movement responded to criticisms from those who did not accept its *sūtras*, it increasingly stressed the superiority of the *Bodhisattva-yāna,* and referred to it as the *Mahā-yāna*: the 'Great Vehicle', or 'Vehicle (Leading to) the Great'. The other 'vehicles' were disparaged as being *hīna*: 'lesser' or 'inferior'. However, the term '*Hīna-yāna*' is not seen as a name for any school of Buddhism, but is a term for a kind of motivation and associated outlook.

A key *sūtra* developed a perspective which, while hostile to the 'Hīna-yāna', sought to portray it as incorporated in and completed by the Mahāyāna: the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* ('White Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma'; '*Lotus*' for short). Chapter 2 of this text achieves this accommodation by what was to become a central Mahāyāna concept, that of *upāya-kauśalya*: skill (*kauśalya*) in means (*upāya*), or skilful means. All Buddhist traditions accept that the Buddha adapted the contents of his teaching to the temperament and level of understanding of his audience. This was by simply selecting his specific teaching from a harmonious body of teachings. The Mahāyāna also holds that the Buddha gave different levels of teaching which might actually appear as conflicting, for the 'higher' level required the undoing of certain over-simplified lessons of the 'lower' level. While the Buddha's ultimate message was that *all* can become omniscient Buddhas, this would have been too unbelievable and confusing to give as a preliminary teaching. For the 'ignorant with low dispositions', he therefore begins by teaching on the four Truths of the Noble Ones,[17] setting out the goal as attaining nirvana by becoming an *arhant*. The *arhant* is seen as still having a subtle ignorance, and as lacking full compassion in his hope of escaping the round of rebirths, thus leaving unawakened beings to fend for themselves. For those who were prepared to listen further, the Buddha then teaches that the true nirvana is attained at Buddhahood, and that all can attain this, even the *arhants* who currently think that they have already reached the goal. The Buddha has just 'one vehicle' (*eka-yāna),* the all-inclusive Buddha-vehicle, but he uses his 'skilful means' to show this by means of three: the vehicles of the disciple, solitary-buddha, and *bodhisattva*. He holds out to people whichever of them corresponds to their inclinations and aspirations, but once he has got them to develop spiritually, he gives them all the supreme Buddha-vehicle, the other ways being provisional ones. As the *bodhisattva* path

17 See pp.11–12 above, and Glossary.

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leads to Buddhahood, it seems hard to differentiate the *bodhisattva* and Buddha-vehicles. The doctrine preached in the *Lotus Sūtra* asserts that every sentient being who has once heard the name of a Buddha and bowed down to him would definitely become a Buddha in the future, regardless of how long this took; because the Buddha-nature (seed of Buddhahood) is inherent in all. Almost all disciples of the Buddha were prophesied to become a Buddha in the far future in different realms of the universe known as 'Buddha-fields' (*Buddha-kṣetra*) or 'Buddha-lands'. Not all Mahāyāna texts follow this 'one vehicle' perspective, however, for some, such as the *Ugra-paripṛcchā* ('Inquiry of Ugra') follow a 'three-vehicle' (*tri-yāna*) one in which *arhant*s do not develop further. Others, such as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, emphasize the importance of *bodhisattva*s not falling back so as to seek the lesser goal of arhantship.

According to the standards of arhantship preserved by Śrāvaka-yāna schools such as the Theravāda, the *arhant* is also described as imbued with loving kindness and as compassionately teaching others. The Theravāda still acknowledges that the long path to Buddhahood, over many many lives, is the loftiest practice, as it aims at the salvation of countless beings (see heading above Th.6). Nevertheless, while the *bodhisattva* path has been and is practised by a few Theravādins (often laypeople), it is seen as a way for the heroic few only. Most, though, have gratefully made use of the historical Buddha's teachings so as to move towards arhantship, whether this be attained in the present life or a future one.

The particular feature of the Mahāyāna is that it urges all 'sons and daughters of good family' to tread the demanding *bodhisattva* path. Moreover, while the earliest Mahāyāna may have been developed by reformist monks, there is then evidence of a transition from a monastically-centred Buddhism, in which monks were dominant in the dissemination of the Dharma, to one where laypeople also made important contributions in spreading and developing the Dharma. The culminating point of this householder movement was characterized by the legend of Vimalakīrti who criticized the conservative elements in monastic Buddhism of devoting oneself to individual liberation which, while avoiding harm to others, was regarded by him as insufficiently concerned with bringing positive benefit to other suffering beings (M.10, 113, 127, 136, 141, 168).

Over the centuries, many monks studied and practised according to both the disciple-vehicle and Mahāyāna; not infrequently, both were present in the same monastery. The Chinese, in fact, did not come to clearly differentiate the Mahāyāna as a separate movement till late in the fourth century.

4 The development of Mahāyāna texts

The Mahāyāna emerged into history as a loose confederation of groups, each associated with one or more of a number of previously unknown *sūtra*s (Skt, Pāli *sutta*). These were preserved in a form of Sanskrit, the prestige language of India, as Latin once was in Europe. Originally, Mahāyāna *sūtra* texts were described as ones which were *vaipulya*, which means 'extensive' or 'extended'; that is, the extension

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of what had been taught by the Buddha indirectly, implicitly, metaphorically. *Vaipulya* texts are one of nine early classifications of the Buddha's words (*buddha-vacana*)[18] in terms of the mode of expression. It corresponds to the Pāli word *vedalla* as found in the titles of the *Mahā-vedalla* and *Cūḷa-vedalla Suttas*.[19] The Mahāyānists emphasized that the words of the Buddha should not be understood only literally, as a word is only a mere sign, which may be for a hidden, deep reality, a 'finger' pointing to the 'moon' far beyond.

Anyone accepting the Mahāyāna literature as genuine *sūtras* – authoritative discourses of the Buddha – thereby belonged to the new movement. This did not necessitate monks and nuns abandoning their old fraternities, as they continued to follow the monastic discipline of the fraternities in which they had been ordained. The Mahāyānists remained a minority among Indian Buddhists for some time, though in the seventh century, perhaps half of the 200,000 or more monks counted by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang) were Mahāyānist.

Traditionalists denied that the Mahāyāna literature was 'the word of the Buddha' (*buddha-vacana*), but Mahāyānists defended their legitimacy through various devices. Firstly, they were seen as inspired utterances coming from the Buddha, now seen as still contactable through meditative visions and vivid dreams. Secondly, they were seen as the products of the same kind of perfect wisdom which was the basis of the Buddha's own teaching of Dharma.[20] Thirdly, in later Mahāyāna, they were seen as teachings hidden by the Buddha in the world of serpent-deities (*nāgas*), till there were humans capable of seeing the deeper implications of his message, who would recover the teachings by means of meditative powers. Each explanation saw the *sūtras* as arising, directly or indirectly, from meditative experiences. Nevertheless, they take the form of dialogues between the 'historical' Buddha and his disciples and gods.

The Mahāyāna *sūtras* were regarded as the second 'turning of the Dharma-wheel', a deeper level of teaching than that in the early *suttas*, with the Buddha's *bodhisattva* disciples portrayed as wiser than his *arhant* disciples. Because of the liberating truth the *sūtras* were seen to contain, there was said to be a huge amount of karmic benefit in copying them out, and disseminating, reciting, expounding, understanding, practising, and even ritually venerating them.

Some Mahāyāna scriptures are in the form of a report of teachings given by the Buddha in a normal human context. Others utilize specific styles of literature to express an understanding of the Buddha's teachings, such that, in them, the Buddha teaches within a marvellous setting of wonders and divine beings, as is found to a small extent in a few early *suttas*, such as the *Mahā-samaya*.[21] Many Mahāyāna *sūtras* reflect this style. In them, the Buddha uses hyperbolic language and par-

18 E.g. *Aṅguttara-nikāya* II.7.

19 *Majjhima-nikāya, suttas* 43 and 44, which are in the form of questions on, and extended explanations of, a number of Buddhist concepts.

20 *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* p. 4.

21 *Dīgha-nikāya, sutta* 20.

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adox, and makes known many transcendent Buddhas and high-level *bodhisattvas* from other worlds, existing in many regions of the universe. A number of these saviour beings, Buddhas and, in other texts, *bodhisattvas*, became objects of devotion and prayer, and greatly added to the appeal and missionary success of the Mahāyāna.

5 Mahāyāna texts and philosophies

Mahāyānists have continued to be influenced by ideas from early Buddhism, preserved, for example in the section of the Chinese Canon on the *āgamas*, which are similar to the *nikāyas* of the Pāli Canon. Some early Mahāyāna texts such as the *Śālistamba* ('Rice Seedling': M.130–31) *Sūtra*, on the conditioned nature of existence, show a transitional phase from earlier Buddhist ideas, while the *Śatapañcaśatka-stotra* ('Hundred and Fifty Verses': M.2) of Mātṛceṭa (second century CE) praise the Buddha in rather traditional ways. Other texts are evidently expanded versions of pre-Mahāyāna texts, such as the *Upāsaka-śīla* ('Laypersons' Precepts': M.1, 23, 30, 38, 42, 50, 53, 56, 64–5, 72–3, 79, 82–4, 87–92, 98, 102, 104, 160) *Sūtra*, translated into Chinese around 425 CE, which builds on texts such as that found in the Theravāda Canon as the *Sigālovāda Sutta* (*Dīgha-nikāya, Sutta* 31: Th.49), but with an emphasis on the layperson's practice as a *bodhisattva*. In the *Ugra-paripṛcchā* ('Inquiry of Ugra': M.49 and 81), first translated into Chinese in the second century CE, teaching lay and monastic *bodhisattvas*, we see signs of the origin of the Mahāyāna among monks living from alms and meditating in the forest.

The Mahāyāna doctrinal perspective is expressed in both *sūtras*, attributed to the Buddha, and a number of *śāstras*, 'treatises' written by named authors. These systematically present the outlook of particular Mahāyāna schools, based on the *sūtras*, logic, and meditational experience. Each school is associated with a particular group of *sūtras*, whose meaning it sees as fully explicit (*nītārtha*); other *sūtras* may be regarded as in need of interpretation (*neyārtha*). This process continued in the lands where the Mahāyāna spread, which also took on differing broad emphases of their own.

In the *Prajñā-pāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom) *Sūtras*, the key idea was that, both due to the interrelation of everything, and the inability of concepts to truly grasp reality, everything we experience is empty of any inherent existence, or inherent nature: the idea of 'emptiness' (*śūnyatā*) of inherent nature/inherent existence (*svabhāva*) (see especially M.137–41). Moreover, this means that the conditioned realm of ordinary experience, in this and other lives (*saṃsāra*), is not ultimately different from or separate from the highest reality, nirvana, which is empty of attachment, hatred and delusion, and cannot be pinned down in concepts. Hence nirvana is not to be sought as beyond the world but in a true understanding of it. Supported by the idea that everything is empty of anything that is worth grasping at, the *bodhisattva* practises the thirty-seven qualities conducive to awakening[22] for the sake of their own benefit, and is devoted to the *bodhisattva* perfections, for the benefit of other sentient beings, knowing that the true benefit of self

22 *Bodhi-pakṣa-dharma* (Skt, *Pāli bodhi-pakkhiya-dhamma*), which include such qualities as the four foundations of mindfulness (Th.138) and the noble eightfold path (Th.99).

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and other cannot really be separated. *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* include: the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* ('8000 Lines': M.54, 70, 76, 140, 153), the *Vajracchedikā* ('Diamond-cutter': M.4, 9, 20, 44, 48, 103), and the *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā* ('25,000 Lines': M.135, 139), and the very popular one-page *Hṛdaya* ('Heart': M.137). A *sūtra* that uses the idea of emptiness to emphasize going beyond all dualities is the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* ('Explanation of Vimalakīrti': e.g. M.127, 136, 141, 168), in which the wisdom of a lay *bodhisattva* outshines that of many leading monks. The idea of emptiness of inherent nature/inherent existence was taken up and developed in the Madhyamaka school of Mahāyāna philosophy, whose root text is the *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* ('Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way': M.138) of Nāgārjuna (c.150–250 CE). Influential works by a later monk of this school, Śāntideva (c. 650–750), are the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* ('Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening': M.43, V.34, 35, 38, and cited in other V. passages), on the *bodhisattva* perfections, and *Śikṣā-samuccaya* ('Compendium of (*Bodhisattva*) Training'), that quotes from many Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

As the Buddha eventually came to the end of his earthly life with his final nirvana, this gave rise to the question of whether he would continue to exist in some way after his supposed final 'extinction' (the literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *nirvāṇa*: extinction of what is painful, and the defilements causing this). The question was listed among others known as 'the fourteen undetermined issues'[23] regarded as beyond the reach of human speculation and rationality. However, after the passing away of their greatly revered teacher, it was natural that the bereaved community, missing his guidance, raised again the question once deemed by the Buddha as unjustifiable. This question entails others concerning the nature of the great teacher. Mahāyāna views on the continuing nature of the Buddha are expressed in such *sūtras* as the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* ('White Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma': M.7, 22, 55, 152), an influential text, and the *Mahā-parinirvāṇa* ('Great nirvana': M.5, 6, 8, 40, 43, 111, 145).

The Mahāyāna also introduced the ideas of many other Buddhas currently active in other parts of the universe, but who could be contacted. One such Buddha, who became especially important in East Asian Buddhism, was Amitābha ('Infinite Light'), also known as Amitāyus ('Infinite Life'). He is seen to dwell in a 'Bissful Land' (*Sukhāvatī*) generated by his own powerful beneficial karma, an ideal realm where rapid spiritual progress is possible, and which is reached by true faith in Amitābha's saving power. An early *sūtra* on the visualisation of him and other Buddhas is the *Pratyutpanna Buddha Saṃmukhāvasthita Samādhi* ('Meditation on the Presence of All Buddhas': M.114), and two influential texts on him are the Larger and Smaller *Sukhāvatī-vyūha* ('Array of the Blissful Land': M.158, 159) *Sūtras*, also known as the Larger and Smaller *Sūtras* on Amitāyus.

Texts such as the *Saṃdhi-nirmocana* ('Freeing the Underlying Meaning': M.143) and *Laṅkāvatāra* ('Descent into Laṅkā/Ceylon': M.142) *Sūtras* emphasize that the world that one experiences is fundamentally

23 In the Theravāda tradition, these are usually ten in number (see Th.20, cf. Th.10).

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mental in nature. What one experiences is an end-product of a complex process of interpretation, influenced by one's habits, tendencies and past actions, along with language. This also applies to our concepts of a material world. Indeed this perspective sometimes says that there is no material world existing beyond our flow of mental experiences. In this perspective, the important thing is to understand how our mind shapes experience, to go beyond the splitting of experience into an inner, supposedly permanent subject-self, and external objects, and experience a fundamental re-orientation at the root of the mind, in the storehouse consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) that is an unconscious store of karmic seeds that shape our conscious experience. This kind of perspective was taken up and developed in the Yogācāra or Cittamātra school of Mahāyāna philosophy, founded by Asaṅga (310–90?) and his half-brother Vasubandhu. Asaṅga is said to have been inspired by the *bodhisattva* Maitreya to compose texts such as the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* ('Ornament of Mahāyāna *Sūtras*'), which includes a systematisation of Mahāyāna ideas on the nature of a Buddha.

Sūtras such as the *Tathāgata-garbha* (M.12), *Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda* ('Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā': M.13) and *Mahā-parinirvāṇa* ('Great nirvana') express the idea of the *Tathāgata-garbha*: the womb/embryo of the *Tathāgata*/Buddha, or Buddha-nature. This is seen as empty of greed, hatred and delusion, but not empty of wondrous Buddha-qualities, and as a radiant reality already present in all beings, for them to discover and mature into Buddhahood. This idea, while drawing on an earlier Buddhist idea that meditation uncovers the radiant nature of the mind (Th.124), may have been in part a response to a resurgent Hinduism, with its idea of an essential, permanent Self within all beings. It repeatedly criticised Buddhism for its not accepting anything as 'Self', as well as for not accepting the Hindu system of divinely-ordained classes and castes. The *Tathāgata-garbha* was seen as the radiant inner potential for Buddhahood in all beings. While in some ways Self-like (as it is seen as a beginningless aspect of a being), it was seen as ultimately Self-less, beyond anything to do with the sense of 'I am' (M.144–46). This idea was systematised in India in the *Ratnagotra-vibhāga* ('Analysis of the Jewel Lineage': M.12), also known as the *Uttara-tantra*, ('Highest Continuum'), attributed to Sāramati or to Maitreya, and had a great inflience on the Buddhism of China and other East Asian countries.

The *(Buddha)-avataṃsaka* ('Flower Adornment of the Buddha': M.39, 46, 51, 62, 71, 96, 112, 149, 154) *Sūtra* is a compendium of many texts which also circulated separately, including the *Daśa-bhūmika* ('Ten Stages') *Sūtra* on the stages of the *bodhisattva* path and the *Gaṇḍa-vyūha* ('Flower-array': M.17, 69, 148) *Sutra*. The latter, a literary masterpiece, is on the long spiritual quest of Sudhana, and the many teachers he meets on this quest. It culminates in a phantasmagorical vision of the nature of reality, in which he sees the deep interrelation of all phenomena, and of their ultimate nature, with everything inter-penetrating everything else across time and space. A traditional Mahāyāna view is that this was the first *sūtra* taught by the Buddha after his awakening, under the Bodhi-tree.

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6 Buddhist texts in China

Buddhism, mainly of a Mahāyāna form, spread along the Silk Road, through Central Asia, to reach China from around 50 CE. There it came to be of considerable and lasting significance, adapting to China's Confucian-dominated cultural context. Chinese-influenced forms of Buddhism later spread to Vietnam, Korea and Japan. The gradual translation of the huge volume of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit and other Indic languages was a monumental exercise.

Perhaps the first Buddhist text translated (late first century CE) was the *Sishierzhang jing* ('*Sūtra* of Forty-two Sections': M.31, 58). A summary of basic Buddhist teachings, later forms of it contained more Mahāyāna elements and some influence from Chinese Daoism. The *Fo chui ban nie pan liao shuo jiao jie jing (Yijiao jing* for short: 'Bequeathed Teaching *Sūtra*'), translated around 400 CE, emphasizes monastic discipline in a Mahāyāna context. The *Fan wang jing* ('Brahmā's Net *Sūtra*': 45, 90, 97, 100, 112), an influential text on monastic and lay *bodhisattva* ethical precepts, became popular in China in the mid-fifth century. Another influential text in China was the *Dizangpusa benying jing* ('Discourse on the Past Vows of Kṣitigarbha *Bodhisattva*':[24] M.11, 24, 35, 68). The Confucian emphasis on 'filial piety', or respect for elders and ancestors, was also given a Buddhist form in texts such as the *Yulanpen jing* ('*Ullambana Sūtra*'; mid-sixth century) and *Fumuenzhong jing* ('*Sūtra* on the Importance of Caring for One's Father and Mother'; eighth century?: M.36).

Various new schools of Buddhism developed in China. Two of these developed over-arching syntheses of the teachings of the many Buddhist texts: the Tiantai ('Heavenly Terrace') and Huayan ('Flower Ornament') – in Japanese, respectively Tendai and Kegon. The Tiantai school was founded by Zhiyi[25] (539–97), and sees the Buddha's highest teachings as expressed in the *Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra*, such that it emphasized the idea of the Buddha-nature, the heavenly nature of the Buddha, and his many skilful means in teaching according to the capacities of his audience. The *Lotus Sūtra* is also the main focus of faith in the Japanese Nichiren school. Works of Zhiyi that have extracts included in this book are these meditation guides: *Fahua San-mei Chan-yi* ('Confessional *Samādhi* of the *Lotus Sūtra*': M.123) and *Mo-ho Zhi-Guan* ('The Great Calm and Insight': M.119).

The Huayan school was founded by Dushun (557–640) and systemised by its third patriarch, Fazang[26] (643–712). This saw the Buddha's highest teaching as expressed in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, especially the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* section of it. Huayan sees ultimate reality as empty of a fixed nature, being a fluid substance that is the basis of everything, just as gold can be shaped into countless forms. Its ideas had considerable influence on the Chan school in China (Thien in Vietnam, Seon in Korea, Zen in Japan). This book contains extracts from *Huayan wu jiao zhi-guan* ('Cessation and Contemplation in the Five Teachings of the Huayan': M.149), attributed to Dushun, and Fazang's *Jinshizizhang* ('Treatise on the Golden Lion': M.150).

24 Which would be *Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrvapraṇidhāna Sūtra* in Sanskrit.

25 In an earlier way of transliterating Chinese, Chih-i.

26 In an earlier way of transliterating Chinese, respectively Tushun and Fa-tsang.

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Two schools of Chinese Buddhism emphasized particular kinds of *practice:* Chan ('Meditation') and Jingtu ('Pure Land'). The Chan school has the semi-legendary Indian monk Bodhidharma (470–543) as its founder, and of great influence on it was its sixth patriarch Huineng (638–713; M.167), especially via the *Liuzi-tan jing* ('Platform *Sūtra* of the Sixth Patriarch'). Indian texts of particular influence on it were the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. It also developed its own kind of literature centring on the *gong-an*[27](Japanese *kōan*), or paradoxical sayings of Chan masters. This book includes extracts from the 'Platform *Sūtra*' (M.125–27, 167), from the inspiring *Xin Xin Ming* ('Inscription on the Mind of Faith': M.128) of Jianzhi Sengcan (d. 606), the third Chan patriarch, and from the *Zuochan yi*, 'Manual for Seated Meditation Practice' (M.124), an influential description of how to sit in meditation by Chan master Changlu Zongze (d. 1107?).

The Jingtu school focuses on devotion rather than meditation, and values texts such as the two *Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtras*. It was founded by Tanluan (476–542) and emphasizes open-hearted devotion to Amitābha Buddha, by chanting his name and visualising his 'Blissful Land' (M.114, 158–59). Its simple practice made it very popular in East Asia. In Japan, it has two forms, the Jōdo ('Pure Land') and Jōdo-shin ('True Pure Land'), the latter emphasising a way of salvation by pure faith alone.

7 The Chinese and Tibetan Canons

The main sources for our understanding of Mahāyāna teachings are the very extensive Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist Canons. While most of the Pāli Canon (of Theravāda Buddhism) has been translated into English, only selected texts from these more extensive Chinese and Tibetan Canons have been translated into Western languages, though much progress is being made. While the texts used by Mahāyāna Buddhists of East Asia are mainly *sūtra* texts attributed to the Buddha and e.g. Chinese treatises based on these, in Vajrayāna areas the main texts used are Tibetan treatises that are systematic presentations of Buddhist thought and practices that extensively quote from the *sūtra*s and *tantra*s, and are based on earlier Indian treatises. In both areas, indigenous treatises played a huge role in the formation of distinctive regional schools of Buddhism.

The Chinese Canon is known as the *Dazangjing* or 'Great Store of Scriptures'. The standard modern edition, following a non-traditional order based on systematization by scholars, is the *Taishō Daizōkyō* ('*Taishō*' for short), published in Japan from 1924 to 1929. It consists of 55 large vols, each of over 1000 pages, containing 2,184 texts (see: http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Portal_talk:Buddhism; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_Tripi%E1%B9%ADaka)

Its contents are:

(i) Translations of the *āgama*s (equivalent to the first four Pāli *nikāya*s) (151 texts in 2 vols.)

27 An 'Old case' – a paradoxical story whose nub, such as 'what is the sound of one hand clapping?', is used as a focus of meditation in the Rinzai Zen school.

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(ii) Translations of the *jātaka*s on past lives of the Buddha, as a *bodhisattva* (68 texts in 2 vols.)
(iii) Translations of Mahāyāna *sūtra*s (628 texts in 13 vols.), sometimes including several translations of the same text. These are grouped into sections on: the Perfection of Wisdom (42 texts in 4 vols.), the *Lotus Sūtra* (16 texts in most of 1 vol.), the *Avataṃsaka* ('Flower Garland'; 32 texts in 1 vol. and a part vol.), the *Ratnakūṭa* ('Heap of Jewels'; 64 texts in one and a part vol.), the *Mahā-parinirvāṇa* ('Great Final Nirvana'; 23 texts in a part vol.), the *Mahā-sannipāta* ('Great Assembly'; 28 texts in 1 vol.), and general '*Sūtra*s' (mostly Mahāyāna; 423 texts in 4 vols.)
(iv) Translations of *tantra*s (572 texts in 4 vols.)
(v) Translations of various early *vinaya*s (on monastic discipline) and some texts outlining 'discipline' for *bodhisattva*s (84 texts in 3 vols.)
(vi) Translations of commentaries on the *āgama*s and Mahāyāna *sūtra*s (31 texts in 1 and a part vol.)
(vii) Translations of various early *abhidharma*s (28 texts in 3 and a part vol.)
(viii) Translations of Madhyamaka, Yogācāra and other *śāstra*s, or 'treatises' (129 texts in 3 vols.)
(ix) Chinese commentaries on the *sūtra*s, *vinaya* and *śāstra*s (158 texts in 12 vols.)
(x) Chinese sectarian writings (175 texts in 4 and a part vol.)
(xi) Biographies (95 texts in 4 vols.)
(xii) Encyclopaedias, dictionaries, catalogues of earlier Chinese Canons, histories, non-Buddhist doctrines (Hindu, Manichean, and Nestorian Christian), and 'ambivalent' texts (800 texts in 4 vols.).

By 1934, there was also a *Taishō Daizōkyō* supplement of 45 volumes containing 736 further texts: Japanese texts, recently discovered texts from the Dunhuang caves in China, apocryphal texts composed in China, iconographies, and bibliographical information. An outline of the Tibetan Canon is given in the introduction to the Vajrayāna passages of this work.

Note that about half ***M.*** passages in this work come from the *Taishō*, and are therefore translated from Chinese. Where they are translated direct from Sanskrit, this is indicated.

Peter Harvey
Most Venerable Thích Tuệ Sỹ

Introduction to the selections from Vajrayāna Buddhism

1

The passages marked '***V.***' in this book represent the textual tradition of Vajrayāna Buddhism. Vajrayāna emerged as a distinctive school of method (*upāya*) within the Mahāyāna, teaching ways of meditation said to effect awakening more rapidly than the practice of the perfections (*pāramitā*s) presented in the *sūtra*s. These esoteric methods are

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taught in a distinct class of Buddhist scriptures known as *tantras*, which started to appear in great number from the fifth century CE in India. Like the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, most Buddhist *tantras* also trace their origins back to the historical Buddha. But the tantric system of practice known as Vajrayāna seems to have been developed by a group of yogis known as *mahāsiddhas* ('great accomplished ones'), most of whom were active under the Pāla Empire (750–1120).

2 The spread of the Vajrayāna

The Vajrayāna was introduced to Tibet during the eighth to eleventh centuries CE, and it here became the official state religion. From there it spread to Mongolia and parts of China. Today, though having suffered heavy losses during the Chinese 'cultural revolution', Vajrayāna Buddhism is still present in historically Tibetan areas of China (not only in the Tibetan Autonomous Region but also in Quinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces) and everywhere in the Himalayan region where Tibetan culture prevails, including the kingdom of Bhutan, parts of Nepal, and the Himalayan states of India. After seven decades of Russian-backed Communist repression, it was revived at the end of the twentieth century in Mongolia, Buryatia, and Kalmykia (parts of Russia with people of Mongolian ethnicity). A separate strand of the Vajrayāna tradition has been preserved by the Newari Buddhists of Nepal, and a tantric school known as Shingon has flourished as one of the schools of Japanese Buddhism.

3 The three Wheels of Dharma

Tibetan Vajrayāna is heir to the cultural forms of late North-Indian Buddhism, which was characterized by a double strand of philosophical study and tantric practice. The former flourished mainly in the great monastic universities, such as Nālandā, where a synthesis of different Buddhist philosophies was taught. All the teachings of the Buddha were seen as belonging to three turnings of the 'Wheel of Dharma' (or three teaching-cycles, *Dharma-cakra*): the first one on the four 'Truths of the Noble Ones' (see L.27) and 'non-Self' (Th.170–171) represented the 'Hīnayāna' ('Lesser Vehicle') level of practice,[28] and the other two belonged to the Mahāyāna. The second Wheel emphasized the teaching of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of inherent nature/inherent existence and the *bodhisattva* path as presented mainly in the Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) *Sūtras*, and the third was seen to contain formulations of ultimate reality in terms more positive than 'emptiness', such as the teaching of 'mind-only' (*citta-mātra*) and the 'Buddha-nature' (*Tathāgata-garbha*). By extension, the *tantras* later also came to be seen as belonging to this latter category, though some Tibetan schools classified them as a fourth Wheel. The meaning of all these different teachings contained in the *sūtras* and their complex relationships were elucidated by the great Mahāyāna philosophers in their *śāstras* (treatises), and late Indian Buddhist philosophy developed an understanding based on a synthesis of their ideas. Thus, stud-

28 See 'Hīnayāna' in Glossary.

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ies at the monastic universities centred on the treatises, rather than on the *sūtra*s directly, though both the Indian and Tibetan treatises often cite the *sūtra*s.

4 Vajrayāna, Mantrayāna, Tantrayāna

The Vajrayāna is also known as the Mantra-, or Tantra-yāna. Though the three terms are often used as synonyms, each one has a slightly different connotation. According to the Tibetan tradition, a '*mantra*' literally 'protects the mind' (*man-tra*), through disrupting negative mental patterns and focusing it on the awakened qualities being cultivated. '*Tantra*' is understood to mean the 'continuity' of the awakened nature of the mind present in all sentient beings (not just humans) that is known as Buddha-nature (*Tathāgata-garbha*). It is uncovered or awakened through the unbroken 'continuity' of the master-disciple tantric lineages that are understood to go back to the Buddha himself. While in the general Mahāyāna, the process of attaining full Buddhahood is said to take three incalculable eons, in the Vajrayāna, one can aspire to attain Buddhahood in one lifetime through the methods taught by the great accomplished tantric masters (*mahāsiddha*s) of India. They gave rise to teaching lineages that eventually reached Tibet where it inspired the founding of different schools or orders (Nyingmapa, Kagyupa, Sakyapa, and Gelukpa being the four main ones) that were dedicated to preserving and transmitting the methods for realizing that continuity. Tantra-yāna is a general name for the way of practice laid down in the Buddhist *tantra*s, characterised by visualization, mantra recitation, and cultivation of various states of meditative concentration (*samādhi*). Finally, the term 'Vajra-yāna' refers to the foremost symbol of the awakened mind, '*vajra*', often translated as 'diamond' or 'thunderbolt'. It is actually the name of the mythical weapon of Indra, chief of the pre-Buddhist gods in India, which was a symbol of indestructibility and mastery.

5 Schools of Tibetan Buddhism[29]

The Nyingmapa school are those who (*pa*) are 'Adherents of the Old (*Tantras*)'. It looks to Padmasambhava, an eighth century Indian tantric guru who did much to establish Buddhism in Tibet, as its founder. It has a system of nine spiritual 'vehicles' (*yāna*): those of the disciple, solitary-buddha and *bodhisattva*, which it sees as ways of 'renunciation' of defilements; those of the three 'outer *Tantras*', which it sees as ways of 'purification'; and those of the three 'inner *Tantras*: *Mahā-yoga, Anu-yoga* and *Ati-yoga*, which it sees as ways of transformation, which transmute defilements into forms of wisdom, rather than seeking to simply negate them. In Nyingmapa doctrine, these are all seen as appropriate for people at different levels of spiritual development. However, in practice, everyone is encouraged to practise the inner *Tantra*s, provided that the basic refuge and *bodhisattva* commitments and vows are also maintained. *Ati-yoga*, the highest teaching, concerns the doctrines and practices of the *Dzogchen*, or 'Great Completion/Perfection'. This

29 By Peter Harvey

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seeks to bring the practitioner to awareness of an uncreated radiant emptiness known as *rig pa* (Skt *vidyā*, insight-knowledge). This is symbolized by Samantabhadra (see V.6), the primordial Buddha who embodies the Dharma-body (see M.9), but it also already present in all beings, as in one interpretation of the *Tathāgata-garbha*/Buddha-nature teachings. The aim is to let go of all mental activities and content, so as to be aware of that in which they occur. The Nyingmapas follow the Old Tantras translated during the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet (7–10th centuries). Over the next centuries, they claim to have discovered many *termas* or 'treasure' texts, which are attributed to Padmasambhava and seen as discovered by a *tertön* or 'treasure-finder'. *Termas* might be physical texts or religious artefacts. In the case of 'mind *termas*', they are seen to have been buried in the unconscious mind of a disciple by Padmasambhava, then rediscovered there by a later incarnation of that disciple. The teaching-transmission by *termas*, which is seen to jump direct from a past teacher to a present recipient, is seen to complement the more usual *Kama* (Oral Tradition) transmission, by which oral and written teachings are passed down the generations.

In the eleventh century, a renaissance of Buddhism led to its firm establishment throughout Tibet and the development of several new schools of Buddhism that were based on new translations of Buddhist texts, so as to be referred to as 'new translation' (*sarma*) schools. At the invitation of a regional king, the ageing monk-professor Atiśa came from India on a missionary tour in 1042. He helped purify the Sangha, emphasizing celibacy, and improved Tibet's understanding of Buddhist doctrine, as based on a mix of Madhyamaka and the *tantras*. His reforms led his main disciple to establish the Kadampa, or 'Bound by Command (of monastic discipline) School', and also influenced two other new schools of the period. The first was the Kagyupa, the 'Whispered Transmission School'. Its founder was Marpa (1012–97), a married layman who had studied with tantric gurus in India and translated many texts. He emphasized a complex system of yoga and secret instructions whispered from master to disciple. His chief pupil was the great poet-hermit-saint Milarepa, whose own pupil Gampopa first established Kagyupa monasteries. The other new school was the Sakyapa, founded in 1073 at the Sakya monastery. It is noted for its scholarship and is close to the Kagyupa in most matters.

An idea which seems to have originated with the Kagyupas in the thirteenth century is that of recognized Emanation-bodies or *tulkus*, of which there are now around 3,000 in Tibet. A *tulku* is often referred to as a 'reincarnate (*yangsid*) lama'. Though in Buddhism all people are seen as the rebirths of some past being, *tulkus* are different in being the rebirth of an identified past person, who was a key lama, and also an emanation of a celestial being. *Tulkus* are recognized as children, based on predictions of their predecessors and the child's ability to pick out the latter's possessions from similar looking ones.

The last major school of Tibetan Buddhism was founded by the reformer Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), on the basis of the Kadampa school and Atiśa's arrangement of teachings in a series of levels, with a purified tantrism at the top. He founded the Gelukpa, or 'Followers of the

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Way of Virtue', whose monks are distinguished from others by the yellow colour of their ceremonial hats. Tsongkhapa emphasized the study of Madhyamaka, and the following of moral and monastic discipline. In his 'Great Exposition of the Stages of the Way' (*Lamrim Ch'enmo*), he argues that one should progress from seeking a good rebirth (a worldly goal), to seeking liberation for oneself (Hīnayāna motivation), to seeking Buddhahood so as to aid the liberation of others (Mahāyāna motivation), with Vajrayāna methods then helping to more speedily attain the Mahāyāna goals. Higher levels of truth or practice are seen to build on, but not subvert, lower ones. Logical analysis prepares the way for direct, non-conceptual insight, and textual transmissions are as important as oral ones.

In the sixteenth century, the head of the Gelukpa school reintroduced Buddhism to the Mongols, who had lapsed from it. One of the Mongol rulers, Altan Khan, therefore gave him the Mongolian title of *Dalai,* 'Ocean (of Wisdom)', Lama. He was regarded as the second reincarnation of a former Gelukpa leader, Tsongkhapa's nephew, so that the latter was seen, retrospectively, as the first Dalai Lama. Each Dalai Lama was seen as a *tulku* who was a re-manifested form of the great *bodhisattva* embodiment of compassion, Avalokiteśvara. The other major Gelukpa *tulku* is the Panchen Lama, seen as a repeated incarnation of Amitābha Buddha.

In 1641, the Mongolians invaded Tibet and established the fifth Dalai Lama as ruler of the country. From then on, the Gelukpa school became the 'established church'. In the nineteenth century, a movement developed known as the Ri-may, meaning 'Impartial', 'Non-aligned' or 'All-embracing'. This was a kind of universalistic eclectic movement that arose in Nyingmapa circles in eastern Tibet, and came to draw in adherents of other schools, even including some Gelukpa ones. However, the Ri-may movement was primarily a teachings-synthesis that rivalled the Gelukpa synthesis. With few exceptions, lamas of the Ri-may traditions trained at Ri-may centres, and Gelukpa ones at Gelukpa ones, with only limited contact between them. The Ri-may synthesis drew together the three non-Gelukpa schools (and some of the semi-Buddhist Bön). These already had in common the existence of lay yogis, an interest in the old *Tantras* and *termas*, and the relatively formless *Dzogchen* teachings/practices provided a unifying perspective.

6 The Tibetan Canon

In this book, the term 'Vajrayāna' is used in a wide sense to refer to the entire system of Tibetan (or Northern Mahāyāna) Buddhism, which has preserved the whole edifice of late Indian Mahāyāna. This is reflected in the structure of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon, which divides the Tibetan translations of Indian Buddhist texts into two main parts: the *Kangyur* (*bKa' 'gyur*[30]) or 'Translated Buddha Word' – two thirds of which is comprised of Mahāyāna Sūtras – and the *Tengyur* (*bsTan 'gyur*) or 'Translated Treatises'. In the Peking edition of these two collections,

30 This book uses forms of Tibetan that give a fair guide to their pronunciation, but where another form follows in brackets, this is the more exact transliteration of the Tibetan.

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there are 330 volumes with 5,092 texts and 224,241 pages.[31] The *Kangyur* contains mainly Mahāyāna *sūtras* and the root-*tantras* (*mūla-tantras*) attributed to the Buddha. In the Peking edition, it consists of 106 vols. with 66,449 pages and 1,112 translated texts, grouped in the following order:

(i) *Tantras* (738 texts in 25 volumes)
(ii) Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtras* (17 texts, plus 13 pre-Mahāyāna 'Protection' texts, in 24 vols.)
(iii) *Avataṃsaka Sūtras* (1 text with 45 chapters in 6 vols.)
(iv) *Ratnakūṭa Sūtras* (49 *Sūtras* in 6 vols.)
(v) Other *sūtras* (268 texts in 32vols.)
(vi) *Vinaya* (monastic discipline) (8 texts in 13 vols.)
(vii) *Praṇidhāna* (aspiration prayers) (18 short texts at the end of final volume)

The *Tengyur* includes the authoritative treatises (*śāstras*) by Indian scholars, with a handful of texts by early Tibetan masters, who commented on the meaning of the *sūtras* and *tantras*. In its Peking edition, it consists of 224 vols with 3,980 texts and 157,792 pages, which are grouped as follows:

(i) *Stotras* (hymns of praise) (63 texts in 1 vol.)
(ii) Commentaries on the *tantras* (3,136 texts in 87 vols.)
(iii) Commentaries and treatises on the *sūtras* (and useful worldly subjects): commentaries on the Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtras* and the *vinaya;* Madhyamaka and Yogācāra treatises, *abhidharma* works, tales and dramas, treatises on such topics as logic, medicine, grammar, arts and applied crafts (e.g., architecture), and other miscellaneous works (781 texts in 136 vols.).

Most of the canonical scriptures – *sūtras, tantras,* and *śāstras* – were translated from Sanskrit originals, under the guidance of Indian scholars (*paṇḍitas*) who helped the transmission of Buddhism into Tibet. The translations were carried out in a 'scientific' manner – with standardized terminology and syntactic rules – to maintain maximum closeness to the original. Therefore, Tibetan translations are generally held to be very reliable. Yet, no text was meant to be studied without oral transmission and detailed practical instruction from a learned and experienced master. The *tantras* in particular have always been considered as esoteric, virtually unintelligible without oral transmission of their actual meaning and proper initiation into their practice.

By the time the enormous task of translating the Indian Buddhist heritage was completed, the development of an indigenous Tibetan scholarship was well under the way. Tibetan authors started composing their own treatises to elucidate the meaning of the *sūtras* and *śāstras*, including the tantric scriptures. Faced with the immense variety of narrative, doctrine, and liberating technique contained in the canonical texts, they inevitably found themselves at the job of ordering

31 For an overview of a number of Tibetan editions of the Kangyur and Tengyur, see: http://84000.co/kangyur-tengyur-genres/.

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and systematizing the material. Following the tradition of North-Indian Buddhist scholarship, they based their doctrinal syntheses on the *śāstras* of Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250), Asaṅga (ca. 310–90, with Maitreya-nātha as his teacher), Vasubandhu (ca. 310–400), Dharmakīrti (ca. 530–600), Candrakīrti (7th century), and Śāntideva (ca. 650–750) – to mention only the greatest Mahāyāna philosophers. The *tantras* were also studied through the commentaries, instructions, and practice manuals written by Indian *mahāsiddhas* and tantric scholars, which were contained in a bulky section of the *Tengyur*. The different tantric lineages – systems of tantric practice handed down from master to disciple reaching Tibet from the seventh to twelfth centuries – became institutionalized in the four main schools and their various branches. Over time, those schools each developed its own literary tradition, resulting in an astonishing proliferation of Vajrayāna literature. Though following the Indian ways was the norm everywhere, there was room for creative innovation. These include 'treasure' texts hidden in Tibet or in the mind stream of Tibetan students by the Indian masters to be rediscovered later at an appropriate time which were included in canonical collections.[32]

7 The selected passages

Passages selected from the Vajrayāna tradition for this book represent the Vajrayāna Buddhist views on the topics selected for the volume. In accordance with the kind of texts emphasized in Tibetan Buddhism, these are best summarized by well-known Tibetan authors like Gampopa (1079–1153) or the Nyingmapa teacher Patrul Rinpoche (1808–1887), whose works we have most often utilized as sources for the selections. From among canonical sources, we have included a few passages from treatises of Nāgārjuna (V.12) and Śāntideva (V.34–5, 38), as well as Atiśa's (982–1054) 'Lamp for the Path to Awakening' (V.10) in its entirety. Texts from Gelukpa teachers are Tsongkhapa's 'The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path' (V.40), 'Prayer of the Secret Life of Tsongkhapa' (V.91), and 'The Song of the Four Mindfulnesses' (V.69) of the Seventh Dalai Lama (1708–1757). 'Mind Training: An Experiential Song of Parting from the Four Attachments' (V.16) is by Sakyapa and Rimay teacher Khyentse Wangpo (1829–1870). The tantric genius for poetry is illustrated by some verses from Tibet's greatest poet, Milarepa (V.8, 11, 17, 23). Specifically tantric texts are best featured in Chapter 2. ('Different Perspectives on the Buddha') – where the tantric view of innate Buddhahood is illustrated by passages taken from the textual tradition of the Great Completion (*Dzogchen*; V.2–6). More information on these and other texts are supplied in the passage introductions and the footnotes.

Most English translations have been newly prepared from the Tibetan by myself for the purpose of inclusion in this volume, though they have profited from already existing translations, which are duly noted.

The translator wishes to thank all those who supported the project. May it benefit many!

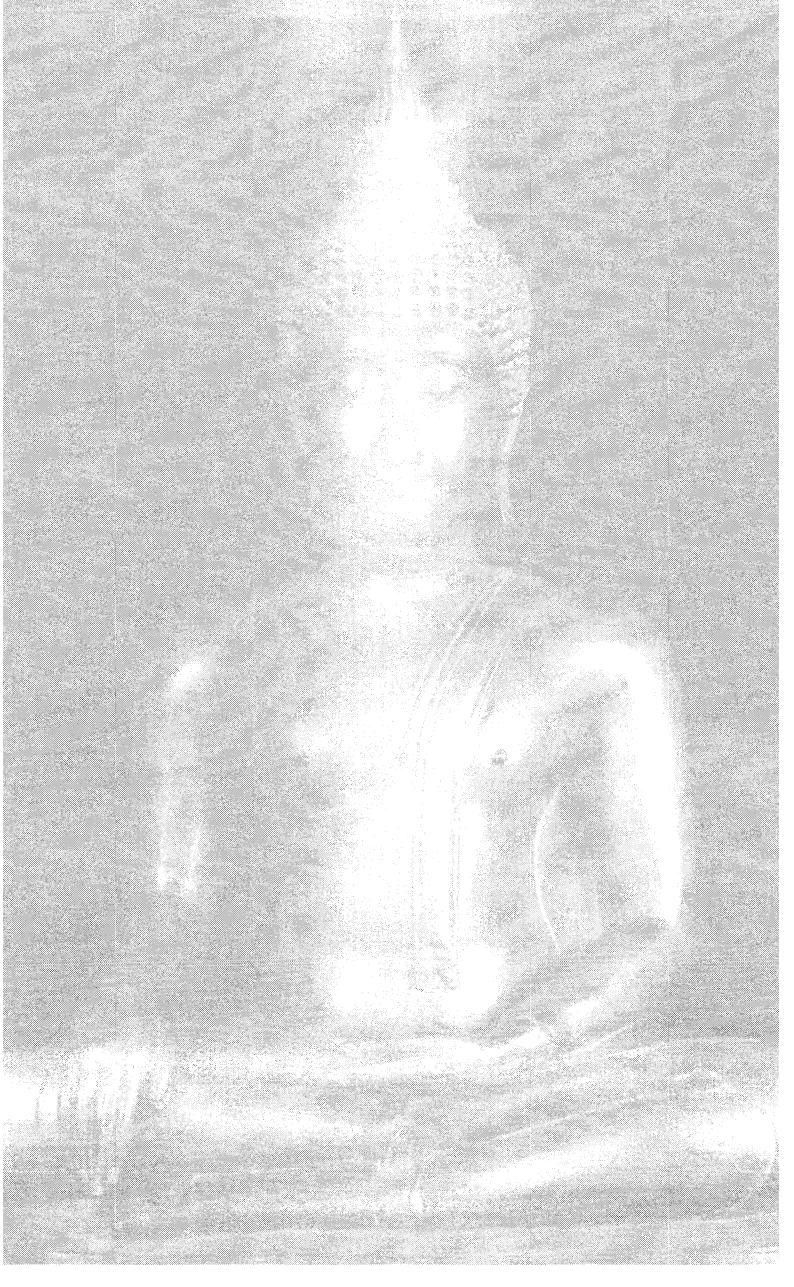
Tamás Agócs

32 Such as the *Nyingma Gyubum (rNying ma'i rGyud 'bum)* of the Nyingma school.

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PART I

THE BUDDHA



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On the previous page:
A Thai image of the Buddha,
touching the earth just prior to his meditation leading
to his awakening (see p.11).

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CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE OF THE HISTORICAL BUDDHA

Conception, birth and early life

The wondrous birth of a great being *L.1*

Here the Buddha addresses Ānanda, the disciple who acted as his chief personal attendant. The Buddha has previously told him of various wondrous things pertaining to his conception and birth, and now asks him to enunciate them so that other monks can hear of and be inspired by them.

Then the Blessed One addressed Venerable Ānanda: 'Ānanda, that being so, you may eulogize more fully the wonderful and marvellous qualities of the Tathāgata.'

'Venerable sir, I heard and learned this from the Blessed One's own lips:

"Ānanda, mindful and clearly comprehending[33] the bodhisatta appeared in the Tusita heaven.[34]" Venerable sir, this I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, mindful and clearly comprehending the bodhisatta remained in the Tusita heaven." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, for the whole of his lifespan the bodhisatta remained in the Tusita heaven." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, mindful and clearly comprehending the bodhisatta departed from the Tusita heaven and descended into his mother's womb." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, when the bodhisatta passed away from the Tusita heaven and descended into his mother's womb, an immeasurable glorious light surpassing the divine majesty of the gods appeared in the world with its gods, māras and brahmās,[35] with its people, renunciants, brahmins, kings and the masses. And even in those awful open world intervals, of gloom and utter darkness, where the sun and the moon, mighty and powerful as they are, cannot make their light prevail; there too an immeasurable glorious light surpassing the divine majesty of the gods appeared. And the beings reborn there perceived each other by that light: 'Friend, so indeed there are also other beings reborn

33 Fully alert, fully aware, or fully knowing.

34 One of the many kinds of heavenly rebirths. A particular feature of this is that it is said to be where *bodhisatta*s dwell immediately prior to the life in which they become a Buddha.

35 This could also be translated 'with its Māra and Brahmā', i.e. the Māra of our particular world and its Great Brahmā.

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here.' And this ten-thousand-fold world-system shook,[36] quaked, and trembled, and an immeasurable glorious light surpassing the divine majesty of the gods appeared in the world." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, when the bodhisatta descended into his mother's womb, four young gods came to guard him at the four quarters so that no humans or nonhumans or anyone at all could harm the bodhisatta or his mother." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, when the bodhisatta descended into his mother's womb, the mother of the bodhisatta was inherently virtuous, refraining from killing living beings, refraining from taking what is not given, refraining from sexual misconduct, refraining from false speech, and refraining from wines, liquors, and intoxicants, the basis of negligence."[37] Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One. ...

... "Ānanda, on the seventh day after the birth of the bodhisatta, the bodhisatta's mother passed away, and was reborn in the Tusita heaven." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, other young women give birth after carrying the child in the womb for nine or ten (lunar) months, but not so the bodhisatta's mother. The bodhisatta's mother gave birth to him after carrying him in her womb for exactly ten months." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, other young women give birth seated or lying down, but not so the bodhisatta's mother. The bodhisatta's mother gave birth to him standing up." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, when the bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, gods received him first, then human beings." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, when the bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, he did not touch the earth. The four young gods received him and set him before his mother saying: 'O queen, rejoice, a son of great power has been born to you'." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, when the bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, he did so dirt free, unsmeared by water, humours, blood, or any kind of impurity, clean and dirt free. Ānanda, suppose there were a gem-jewel placed on a Kāsi cloth, then the gem would not smear the cloth or the cloth the gem. Why is that? It is because of the purity of both. Ānanda, so too when the bodhisatta came forth from his

36 World-system: a single world-system is something like a solar system, which extends as far as the moon and the sun move in their course and light up the quarters with their radiance. There are also: clusters of 1000 of these; galactic clusters of 1000 of these clusters; and super-galactic clusters of 1000 of these galactic clusters (Th.62). Between world-system are pitch-dark world-intervals in which certain unfortunate beings live lonely lives.

37 These form the five ethical precepts recommended for the lay follower.

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mother's womb, he did so dirt free, unsmeared by water, humours, blood, or any kind of impurity, clean and dirt free." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, when the bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, two jets of water appeared to pour from the sky, one cool and one warm, for bathing the bodhisatta and his mother." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "Ānanda, as soon as the bodhisatta was born, he stood firmly with his feet on the ground; then he took seven steps facing north, and with a white parasol held over him, he looked at every quarter and uttered the words establishing his leadership:[38]

I am the highest in the world;
I am the best in the world;
I am the foremost in the world.
This is my last birth; now no more renewed existence."

Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.

... "When the bodhisatta came forth from his mother's womb, an immeasurable glorious light surpassing the divine majesty of the gods appeared in the world with its gods, māras and brahmās, with its people, renunciants, brahmins, kings and the masses. And even in those awful open world intervals, of gloom, and utter darkness, where the sun and the moon, mighty and powerful as they are, cannot make their light prevail; there too an immeasurable glorious light surpassing the divine majesty of the gods appeared. And the beings reborn there perceived each other by that light: 'Friend, so indeed there are also other beings reborn here.' And this ten-thousand-fold world-system shook, quaked, and trembled, and an immeasurable glorious light surpassing the divine majesty of the gods appeared in the world." Venerable sir, this too I consider as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.'

'Ānanda, that being so, you should consider this too as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Tathāgata: Ānanda, here for the Tathāgata feelings are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear; perceptions are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear; thoughts are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear; Ānanda, you should consider this too as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Tathāgata.'

'Venerable sir, since this is so, I consider this too as a wonderful and marvellous quality of the Blessed One.'

Acchariya-abbhuta Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.118–120, 122–124, trans. G.A.S.

Prediction of his future greatness *L.2*

This passage tells of how the gods informed a sage of the birth of the bodhisatta, *and how he eagerly went to see him, and predicted his future attainment of awakening.*

38 Literally bull-like speech, i.e. like the roar of a bull marking his leadership of a herd.

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The seer Asita saw King Sakka[39] and the host of the Thirty gods[40] who were joyful and happy and in their clean garments, praising exceedingly, having held up a cloth.

Seeing the gods were pleased in mind and cheerful, having paid his respects, he said this there: 'Why is the community of gods extremely happy? What do they celebrate holding up a cloth?'

Even when there was a battle with the demi-gods, the victory went to the gods (and) the demi-gods were defeated. Even then there was no such excitement. Having seen what marvel are the Maruts (the gods) elated?

The gods shout, sing, and play music; they slap their arms, and dance. I ask you the inhabitants of the Meru's crest:[41] Sirs, please dispel my doubt quickly.'

'The bodhisatta, excellent jewel, incomparable, has been born in the village of the Sakyans, in the Lumbinī country, in the human world for our benefit and happiness. So we are jubilant, exceedingly pleased.

He is the best of all beings, the topmost person, the human bull, the greatest among all people. Roaring like a mighty lion, the overlord of animals, he will cause the wheel (of Dhamma) to turn in the grove named after the seers.'[42]

Having heard the utterance, he descended hastily and arrived at the dwelling of Suddhodana.[43] Having sat down there the seer said to the Sakyans: 'Where is the young boy? I too wish to see him.'

The Sakyans then showed the child, the young boy, who was resplendent with glory, perfect in complexion, like burning gold burnished by an incredibly skilful smith in the very mouth of the furnace, to the one called Asita.

Seeing the young boy blazing like fire, purified like the lord of stars going in the sky, like the glittering sun released from clouds in autumn, he, being joyful, experienced abundant rapture.

The Maruts held in the sky an umbrella with many ribs and a thousand circles. Yak-tail fans with golden handles fluttered up and down; but the holders of the umbrella and the fans were not seen.

The seer called Kaṇhasiri (Asita), the one with matted locks, having seen (the young boy) like a golden ornament on a pale red blanket, and the white umbrella being held above his head, with gladdened mind, cheerful, received him.

Having received the Sakyan bull, examining him, he, an expert in marks and mantras, raised his voice with confidence: 'This one, incomparable, is supreme among the two legged (humans).'

Then, reflecting on his own departure, being dejected, he shed tears.

39 Sakka, king of gods as he is called, is the ruler of the group of the Thirty-three, a heaven in the realm of sensual desire. In the Vedic religion, he is known as Indra, a forceful and sometimes intoxicated god, but in Buddhism he is transformed into a virtuous heavenly king, called *sakka*, able or capable, understood to be a follower of the Buddha. Interestingly he is married to Sujā, from the opposing demi-gods!

40 A round figure reference to thirty three gods.

41 Meru, also known as Sumeru (excellent Meru) is the tallest mountain in the Indian mythology.

42 This refers to the Isipatana grove in Varanasi, where the Buddha's gave his first discourse.

43 Suddhodana, the Sakyan ruler of Kapilavatthu, is the father of the *bodhisatta*.

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Seeing the seer wailing, the Sakyans said: 'Surely, there will not be any danger to the young boy'?

Seeing the Sakyans unhappy, the seer said: 'I do not see any harm destined for the young boy. Nor will there be any danger for him. This is not an inferior being. Be pleased.

This boy will reach the peak of awakening. Seeing what is supremely purified, having sympathy for the benefit of the great majority, he will turn the wheel of the Dhamma.[44] His holy life[45] will be widely known.

Little of my life here remains; then there will be death for me. I shall not hear the Dhamma of the peerless one; so I am afflicted, overwhelmed by disaster, miserable.

Nālaka Sutta: Sutta-nipāta 679–694, trans. G.A.S.

Parents *L.3*

Here an awakened monk names the Buddha's parents, with the Buddha's father as in a certain sense the monk's 'grandfather'.

A hero of great wisdom indeed cleanses seven generations in whatever family he is born. I think, Sakiya (Suddhodana), you are the king of gods, for you begot the sage who is truly named.

The father of the great seer is called Suddhodana. The mother of the awakened one was called Māyā, who, having cherished the bodhisatta with her womb, after the breaking up of the body rejoices in the three heavens.

She, Gotamī[46] (Māyā), having died, having descended from here, being possessed of divine sensual pleasures, rejoices in the five strands of sensual pleasures, surrounded by the groups of gods.

I am the son (the disciple) of the Buddha, who endures what is beyond endurance, the son of the incomparable Venerable Aṅgīrasa.[47] You, Sakiya (Suddhodana), are my father's father; truly you are my grandfather, Gotama.

Kāḷudāyī's verses: *Theragāthā* 533–536, trans. G.A.S.

Gotama's family *L.4*

This passage refers to the Buddha's son, who later ordained as a monk under him and attained arahantship. The Buddha's father remained a layperson and attained stream-entry, the first level of spiritual nobility; his step-mother (Mahā-pajāpatī) became the first nun, and an arahant*; his wife also seems to have also become a nun, and an* arahant.

They know me as 'lucky' Rāhula – lucky for two reasons: one that I am the son of the awakened one, and the other that I am one with vision of truths.

Rāhula's verses: *Theragāthā* 295, trans. G.A.S.

Lavish young life *L.5*

This passage describes an early life of great comfort, but then moves to reflections on ageing, sickness and death as coming to us all.

44 That is, will set in motion the influence of his teaching (Dhamma).
45 The life of celibacy focussed on the study and practice of the Dhamma
46 Feminine form of the surname Gotama.
47 Which may mean 'Shining One', or mean a member of the Aṅgīrasa tribe.

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Monks, I lived in refinement, utmost refinement, and total refinement. In my father's home, there were lotus ponds just made for me: one where red-lotuses bloomed, one where white lotuses bloomed, one where blue lotuses bloomed, all for my sake. I used no sandalwood that was not from Kāsi.[48] My turban was from Kāsi, as were my tunic, my lower garment, and my outer cloak. A white umbrella was held over me day and night to protect me from cold, heat, dust, dirt, and dew.

Monks, I had three mansions: one for the cold season, one for the hot season, and one for the rainy season. During the four months of the rainy season, being entertained in the mansion for the rainy-season, by musicians without one man among them, I did not once come down from the mansion. Whereas the servants, workers, and retainers in others' homes are fed meals of broken rice with lentil soup, in my father's home the servants, workers, and retainers were fed wheat, rice, and meat.

Monks, endowed with such affluence, living in such refinement, I considered: 'When an untaught ordinary person, himself subject to ageing, not beyond ageing, sees another who is aged, he is horrified, humiliated, and disgusted, oblivious to himself that he too is subject to ageing, not beyond ageing. If I who am subject to ageing, not beyond ageing, were to be horrified, humiliated, and disgusted on seeing another person who is aged, that would not be fitting for me.' As I pondered thus, the young person's intoxication with youth entirely dropped away.

... [The same is then said replacing 'ageing' with 'illness' and then 'death', such that] the healthy person's intoxication with health entirely dropped away. ... the living person's intoxication with life entirely dropped away.

Sukhumāla Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.145, trans. G.A.S.

L.6 Pleasures of the senses

In this passage, the Buddha reflects on the pleasures of his youth, and then on the limitations and dangers of such pleasures.

'Māgandiya,[49] formerly when I lived the home life, I enjoyed myself, provided and endowed with the five strands of sensual pleasure:[50] forms discernible by the eye that are wished for, desired, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust; sounds discernible by the ear; odours discernible by the nose; flavours discernible by the tongue; tangibles discernible by the body, that are wished for, desired, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensual desire and provocative of lust.

... On a later occasion, having understood as they really are the origin, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger of sensual pleasures, and the escape from them, I abandoned craving for sensual pleasures; I removed fever for sensual pleasures; I abide without thirst, with a mind inwardly at peace.

48 A state whose capital was Varanasi.

49 Māgandiya was a hedonist who advocated the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. The Buddha here is teaching him the evil consequences of pursuing sensual pleasure.

50 It is said that a man derives these pleasures from a woman; similarly a woman from a man. So it seems sensual pleasure (*kāma*) primarily means sexual pleasure.

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I see other beings who are not free from lust for sensual pleasures, being devoured by craving for sensual pleasures, burning with fever for sensual pleasures, indulging in sensual pleasures. I do not envy them, nor do I delight therein. Why is that? Māgandiya, there is a (meditative) delight apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, which surpasses even divine pleasure. Since I take delight in that, I do not envy what is inferior, nor do I delight therein. ...

Māgandiya, suppose there was a leper with sores and blisters on his limbs, being devoured by worms, scratching the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a burning charcoal pit. Then his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, would bring a physician to treat him. The physician would make medicine for him, and by means of that medicine the man would be cured of his leprosy and would become well and happy, independent, master of himself, able to go where he likes. Then he might see another leper with sores and blisters on his limbs, being devoured by worms, scratching the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a burning charcoal pit.

Māgandiya, what do you think? Would the man envy that leper for his cauterizing the body over a burning charcoal pit, or for his use of medicine?' 'No, venerable Gotama. Why is that? Venerable Gotama, because when there is sickness, there is need for medicine; when there is no sickness, there is no need for medicine.' 'Māgandiya, similarly when I lived the home life before, I enjoyed myself provided and endowed with the five strands of sensual pleasure. ... On a later occasion, having understood as they really are the origin, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger of sensual pleasures, and the escape from them, I abandoned craving for sensual pleasures, I removed fever for sensual pleasures, and now I abide without thirst, with a mind inwardly at peace.

Now I see other beings who are not free from lust for sensual pleasures, being devoured by craving for sensual pleasures, burning with fever for sensual pleasures, indulging in sensual pleasures, but I do not envy them, nor do I delight therein. Why is that? Māgandiya, there is a delight apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, which surpasses even divine pleasure. Since I take delight in that, I do not envy what is inferior, nor do I delight therein.

Māgandiya Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.504–506, trans. G.A.S.

The quest for awakening

The noble search *L.7*

In this passage, the Buddha describes the 'noble search' for that which is beyond the limitations of conditioned existence, and how he began this search.

Monks, there are these two kinds of search: the noble search and the ignoble search. Monks, what is the ignoble search? Monks, here someone being himself subject to birth seeks what is also subject to birth; being himself subject to ageing he seeks what is also subject to ageing; being himself subject to sickness he seeks what is also subject to sickness; being himself subject to death he seeks what is also subject to

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death; being himself subject to sorrow he seeks what is also subject to sorrow; being himself subject to defilements he seeks what is also subject to defilement.

Monks, what may be spoken of as subject to birth? Wife and children are subject to birth; men and women slaves are subject to birth; goats and sheep are subject to birth; fowl and pigs are subject to birth; elephants, cattle, horses, and mares are subject to birth; gold and silver are subject to birth. Monks, these acquisitions are subject to birth. One who is tied to these things, infatuated with them, and addicted to them, being himself subject to birth seeks what is also subject to birth. ... ['Wife and children' etc. are then likewise each explained to be subject to 'ageing' and 'defilement',[51] and all but 'gold and silver' to be subject to 'sickness', 'death', and 'sorrow']. One who is tied to these things, infatuated with them, and addicted to them, being himself subject to ageing [etc.] seeks what is also subject to ageing [etc.]. Monks, this is the ignoble search.

Monks, what is the noble search? Here someone, being himself subject to birth, knowing the danger in what is subject to birth, seeks the unborn supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being himself subject to ageing, knowing the danger in what is subject to ageing, he seeks the unageing supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being himself subject to sickness, knowing the danger in what is subject to sickness, he seeks the unailing supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being himself subject to death, knowing the danger in what is subject to death, he seeks the deathless supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being himself subject to sorrow, knowing the danger in what is subject to sorrow, he seeks sorrowless supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being himself subject to defilement, knowing the danger in what is subject to defilement, he seeks the undefiled supreme security from bondage, nirvana. Monks, this is the noble search.

Monks, before my awakening, not yet fully awakened, while I was still a bodhisatta, I too being myself subject to birth, sought what was also subject to birth; being myself subject to ageing ... sickness ... death ... sorrow ... and defilement, I sought what was also subject to these.

Monks, then I considered: 'Why, being myself subject to birth, do I seek what is also subject to birth? Why, being myself subject to ageing ... sickness ... death ... sorrow ... and defilement, do I seek what is also subject to these?

Suppose that, being myself subject to birth, knowing the danger in what is subject to birth, I seek the unborn supreme security from bondage, nirvana. Suppose that, being myself subject to ageing [etc.], knowing the danger in what is subject to ageing [etc.], I seek the unageing ... the unailing ... the deathless ... the sorrowless ... the undefiled supreme security from bondage, nirvana.

Monks, later while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my

51 I.e. both mental faults, and impurities in precious metals.

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hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness.[52]

Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.161–163, trans. G.A.S.

Going forth *L.8*

This passage is on the start of Gotama's life of renunciation and spiritual seeking.

Aggivessana, before my awakening, not yet fully awakened, while I was still a bodhisatta, I considered: 'Home life is a constriction, a sphere of dust;[53] the life gone forth[54] is an open-air life. It is not easy, while living in a home,[55] to lead the holy life absolutely perfect and entirely pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness?'

Aggivessana, later while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life into homelessness.

Mahā-saccaka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.240–241, trans. G.A.S.

Preparing for spiritual striving *L.9*

I shall praise going-forth, as the one with vision went forth, as he, examining, found delight in going-forth.

Seeing that this home life is a constriction, the sphere of dust, and that going-forth is an open-air life, he went forth.

Having gone forth, he avoided evil deeds with the body; having abandoned bad conduct in word, he purified his mode of living.

The Buddha[56] went to Rājagaha;[57] the one endowed with the excellent marks[58] went to Giribbaja, walked among the Magadhans for collecting alms.

Standing in his palace Bimbisāra[59] saw him; seeing the one endowed with the marks he said this:

'Sirs, look at this one who is handsome, large, pure; he is endowed with good conduct as he looks ahead a yoke's length only.[60]

With down-turned eyes, possessing mindfulness, this one is not as though from a lowly family. Let the royal messengers run out to find where the monk will go.'

The royal messengers sent out followed behind him (thinking): 'Where will the monk go? Where will his dwelling be?'

52 The life of a wandering renunciant.
53 Of the defilements such as greed and hate.
54 A life of renunciation.
55 In a household, that is, living a worldly life in a family.
56 Though he is yet to attain the awakening, the poem refers to him with the word 'Buddha'.
57 Capital of Magadha
58 See L.38.
59 Bimbisāra, King of Magadha, who became a very close devotee of the Buddha, visiting him whenever he found an opportunity. In his old age, Bimbisāra was murdered by his power-hungry son, Ajātasattu.
60 The distance of a plough, only a little distance ahead, roughly two meters.

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Going on a continuous round,[61] with sense-doors guarded,[62] well-restrained, he filled his bowl quickly, being attentive and mindful.

Having wandered on his alms-round, having gone out of the city, the sage took himself to Mt Paṇḍava (thinking): 'Here will be my dwelling.'

Seeing him taking his dwelling, the three messengers sat down; among them one came back alone and informed the king:

'Great king, that monk is seated on the eastern side of Mt Paṇḍava, like a tiger or bull, like a lion in a mountain cave.'

Hearing the messenger's word, the ruler went hurrying in the state vehicle out to Mt Paṇḍava.

That ruler, going by vehicle as far as the vehicle park, descended from the vehicle, and went up to him on foot. Reaching him, he sat down.

Having sat down, the king then exchanged the customary friendly greetings; having exchanged greetings, he said this:

'You are young and tender, in your first youth, a stripling, having a good complexion and stature, like a ruler of good birth, making beautiful the van of the army, at the head of a community of elephants. I shall give you wealth; enjoy it. Tell me your birth, when asked.'

'King, straight on in that direction there is a people, living on the flank of the Himalayas, having wealth and vigour, belonging to one who has a long connection to the Kosalans.

They are Ādicca by clan, Sakya by birth. From that family I went forth, not desiring pleasures of the senses.

Having seen the peril in sensual pleasures, having seen going-forth as safety, I shall go in order to strive. In that my mind delights.

Pabbajjā Sutta: Sutta-nipāta 405–424, trans. G.A.S.

Attaining refined, formless states

In his spiritual quest, Gotama at first went to two teachers who taught him how to attain two 'formless' mystical states beyond perception of physical things, which he later incorporated in his own teaching. In the following passages, though, the fact that they fell short of his goal is emphasized.

L.10 The 'sphere of nothingness' taught by Āḷāra Kālāma

Monks, having gone forth thus, searching for what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to meet Āḷāra Kālāma and said to him: 'Friend Kālāma, I want to lead the holy life in this Dhamma and discipline.'[63] Monks, thus being informed, Āḷāra Kālāma said this to me: 'The venerable one may stay here. This Dhamma (teaching, and what it leads to) is such that a wise man can soon enter upon and dwell in it, realizing for himself through direct insight the Dhamma of his own teacher.'

Monks, before long, so quickly, I learned that Dhamma. Monks, in

61 Visiting every house in a village for alms, without being selective, giving every family the opportunity to generate beneficial karma by offering food.

62 Restraint of the five physical senses and mind, so as not to arouse states such as greed or aversion.

63 That is, a religio-philosophical way of teaching and practice

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the sense of mere lip-reciting and rehearsal, I spoke the knowledge-teaching and the elder's teaching, and I, and others too, claimed: 'I know and see.'

Monks, I considered: 'It is not through mere faith alone that Āḷāra Kālāma declares that, by realizing it for himself with direct insight, he enters upon and dwells in this Dhamma. Certainly, Āḷāra Kālāma dwells knowing and seeing this Dhamma.' Monks, then I went to Āḷāra Kālāma and asked him: 'Friend Kālāma, in what way do you declare that, by realizing it for yourself with direct insight, you enter upon and dwell in this Dhamma?' Monks, in replying, Āḷāra Kālāma declared the sphere of nothingness.[64]

Monks, I considered: 'Not only Āḷāra Kālāma has faith, I too have faith; not only Āḷāra Kālāma has vigour, I too have vigour; not only Āḷāra Kālāma has mindfulness, I too have mindfulness; not only Āḷāra Kālāma has meditative concentration, I too have meditative concentration; not only Āḷāra Kālāma has wisdom, I too have wisdom.[65] Suppose I endeavour to realize the Dhamma that Āḷāra Kālāma declares he enters upon and dwells in by realizing it for himself with direct insight?' Monks, before long, quickly, I entered upon and dwelled in that Dhamma by realizing it for myself with direct insight.

Monks, then I went to Āḷāra Kālāma and asked him: 'Friend Kālāma, is it in this way that you declare that you enter upon and dwell in this Dhamma by realizing it for yourself with direct insight?' 'Friend, that is the way I declare that I enter upon and dwell in this Dhamma by realizing it for myself with direct insight.' 'Friend Kālāma, it is in this way that I also enter upon and dwell in this Dhamma by realizing it for myself with direct insight.'

'Friend, it is a gain for us, it is an excellent gain for us that we have such a companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma that I declare I enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for myself with direct insight is the Dhamma that you enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for yourself with direct insight. And the Dhamma that you enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for yourself with direct insight is the Dhamma that I declare I enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for myself with direct insight. So you know the Dhamma that I know, and I know the Dhamma that you know. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come, friend, let us now lead this community together.'

Monks, thus Āḷāra Kālāma, my teacher, placed me, his pupil, on an equal footing with himself and accorded me the highest honour. However, monks, I considered: 'This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to higher knowledge, to awakening, to nirvana, but only to rebirth in the sphere of nothingness.' Monks, not being satisfied with that Dhamma, being disappointed with that Dhamma, I left.

Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.163–165, trans. G.A.S.

64 Or 'no-thingness', which in the Buddha's later teaching is the name for the third formless attainment (see Th.142). However, in Buddhism, this is attained via the four meditative absorptions, whereas here, this seems not to be the case.

65 Faith, vigour, mindfulness, meditative concentration and wisdom are the five spiritual faculties also taught in Buddhism (see Th.89).

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L.11 The 'sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception' taught by Rāma and his son

In this passage, Gotama goes beyond his teacher by attaining a state that only the teacher's father had attained.

Monks, searching for what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I went to meet Uddaka the son of Rāma (Rāmaputta) and said to him: 'Friend, I want to lead the holy life in this Dhamma and discipline.' Monks, thus being informed, Uddaka the son of Rāma said this to me: 'The venerable one may stay here. This Dhamma (teaching and what it leads to) is such that a wise man can soon enter upon and dwell in it, realizing it for himself through direct insight the Dhamma of his own teacher.'

Monks, before long, so quickly, I learned that Dhamma. Monks, in the sense of mere lip-reciting and rehearsal, I spoke the knowledge-teaching and the elder's teaching, and I, and others too, claimed: 'I know and see.'

Monks, I considered: 'It was not through mere faith alone that Rāma declared that, by realizing it for himself with higher knowledge, he entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma. Certainly, Rāma dwelled knowing and seeing this Dhamma.' Monks, then I went to Uddaka the son of Rāma and asked him: 'Friend, in what way did Rāma declare that, by realizing it for himself with higher knowledge, he entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma?' Monks, in replying, Uddaka the son of Rāma declared the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.[66]

Monks, I considered: 'Not only did Rāma have faith, I too have faith; not only did Rāma have vigour, I too have vigour; not only did Rāma have mindfulness, I too have mindfulness; not only did Rāma have meditative concentration, I too have concentration; not only did Rāma have wisdom, I too have wisdom. Suppose I endeavour to realize the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and dwelled in by realizing it for himself with direct insight?' Monks, not long before, so quickly, I entered upon and dwelled in that Dhamma by realizing it for myself with direct insight.

Monks, then I went to Uddaka the son of Rāma and asked him: 'Friend, was it in this way that Rāma declared that he entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing it for himself with direct insight?' 'Friend, that is the way that Rāma declared that he entered upon and dwelled in this Dhamma by realizing it for himself with direct insight.' 'Friend, it is in this way that I also enter upon and dwell in this Dhamma by realizing it for myself with direct insight.'

'Friend, it is a gain for us, it is a great gain for us that we have such a companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and dwelled in by realizing it for himself with direct insight is the Dhamma that you enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for yourself with direct insight. And the Dhamma that you enter upon and dwell in by realizing it for yourself with direct insight is the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered upon and dwelled in by real-

66 Also the name for a formless attainment in Buddhism: the fourth one, beyond the sphere of nothingness.

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izing it for himself with direct insight. So you know the Dhamma that Rāma knew and Rāma knew the Dhamma that you know. As Rāma was, so are you; as you are, so was Rāma. Come, friend, now lead this community.'

Monks, thus Uddaka the son of Rāma, my fellow monk, placed me in the position of the teacher[67] and accorded me the highest honour. But I considered: 'This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct insight, to awakening, to nirvana, but only to rebirth in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.' Not being satisfied with that Dhamma, being disappointed with that Dhamma, I left.

Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.165–166, trans. G.A.S.

The ascetic life of rigorous self-denial

In the next phase of his spiritual quest, Gotama tried another available method of spiritual development: the attempt to wilfully master the body and its desires by such things as fasting and holding of the breath for long periods. As will be seen, he later criticised this.

The extremity of his asceticism *L.12*

In this passage, the Buddha describes how he practised four modes of austere living that were then common, and are still practised by some non-Buddhist Indian ascetics.

Sāriputta, I recall having lived a holy life consisting of four factors: I have been an ascetic, a supreme ascetic; I have been unkempt, supremely unkempt; I have been scrupulous, supremely scrupulous; I have been secluded, supremely secluded.

Sāriputta, there my practice of asceticism was such that I went naked, rejecting conventions, licking my hands, not coming when asked, not stopping when asked. I did not accept food brought or food specially made or an invitation to a meal; I received nothing from a pot, from a bowl, across a threshold, across a stick, across a pestle, from two eating together, from a pregnant woman, from a woman giving suck, from a woman lying in the midst of men, from where food was advertised to be distributed, from where a dog was waiting, from where flies were bustling. I accepted no fish or meat, I drank no liquor, wine, or fermented brew.

I kept to one house, to one morsel;[68] I kept to two houses, to two morsels; I kept to three houses, to three morsels; I kept to four houses, to four morsels; I kept to five houses, to five morsels; I kept to six houses, to six morsels; I kept to seven houses, to seven morsels.

I lived on the food from one donor, from two donors, from three donors, from four donors, from five donors, from six donors, from seven donors; I took food once a day, once every two days, once every

67 Compared to Āḷāra Kālāma's offer of co-leadership, Uddaka son of Rāma offers him the full leadership, rather the teachership.

68 I.e. going just to one house and collecting one morsel of food.

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three days, once every four days, once every five days, once every six days, once every seven days; thus even up to once every fortnight, I dwelt pursuing the practice of taking food at stated intervals.

I was an eater of greens, eater of millet, eater of wild rice, eater of hide-parings, eater of moss, eater of rice-bran, eater of rice-scum, eater of sesamum flour, eater of grass, eater of cow-dung. I lived on forest roots and fruits; I fed on fallen fruits.

I clothed myself in hemp, in hemp-mixed cloth, in shrouds, in refuse rags, in tree bark, in antelope hide, in strips of antelope hide, in *kusa*-grass fabric, in bark fabric, in wood-shavings fabric, in head-hair wool, in animal wool, in owls' wings.

I was one who pulled out hair and beard,[69] pursuing the practice of pulling out hair and beard.

I was one who stood continuously, rejecting seats. I was one who squatted continuously, devoted to maintaining the squatting position. I was one who used a mattress of spikes; I made a mattress of spikes my bed.

I dwelt pursuing the practice of (ritual) bathing in (cold) water three times daily including in the evening.

Thus in such a variety of ways I dwelt pursuing the practice of tormenting and mortifying the body. Sāriputta, such was my practice of asceticism.

Sāriputta, there my pursuit of being unkempt was such that just as the bole of a *tindukā* tree, accumulating over the years, cakes and flakes off, so too, dust and dirt, accumulating over the years, caked off my body and flaked off. It never occurred to me: 'Let me rub this dust and dirt off with my hand, or let another rub this dust and dirt off with his hand.' Sāriputta, such was my practice of being unkempt.

Sāriputta, my practice of scrupulousness was such that I was always mindful in stepping forwards and stepping backwards. I was full of pity in regard to a drop of water[70] thus: 'Let me not hurt the tiny creatures in the crevices of the ground.' Sāriputta, such was my practice of scrupulousness.

Sāriputta, my practice of seclusion was such that I would plunge into some forest and dwell there. And when I saw a cowherd or a shepherd or someone gathering grass, or sticks, or a woodsman, I would flee from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hollow to hollow, from hillock to hillock. Why was that? So that they should not see me and I should not see them.

Sāriputta, just as a forest-bred deer, on seeing human beings, flees from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hollow to hollow, from hillock to hillock, so too, when I saw a cowherd or a shepherd or someone gathering grass, or sticks, or a woodsman, I would flee from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hollow to hollow, from hillock to hillock. Sāriputta, such was my practice of seclusion.

Sāriputta, I went on all fours to the cow-pens when the cattle had gone out and the cowherd had left them, and I fed on the dung of the young suckling calves. Sāriputta, as long as my own excrement and

69 Jain monks still do this, while Buddhist monks shave them off.
70 Likewise, Jains see life as present everywhere.

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urine lasted, I fed on my own excrement and urine. Sāriputta, such was my practice of great distortion in feeding.

Sāriputta, I plunged into some awe-inspiring grove and dwelt there: a grove so awe-inspiring that normally it would make a man's hair stand up if he were not free from lust.

Sāriputta, when those cold wintry nights came during the eight-day interval of frost, I would dwell by night in the open and by day in the grove. In the last month of the hot season I would dwell by day in the open and by night in the grove.

Sāriputta, there came to me spontaneously this verse never heard before:

> The sage has engaged in searching, being heated and chilled, alone in the awe-inspiring grove, naked, no fire to sit beside.

Sāriputta, I made my bed in a charnel ground supported on a skeleton.

Sāriputta, cowherd boys came up and spat on me, urinated on me, threw dirt at me, and poked sticks into my ears. Sāriputta, yet I do not recall that I ever aroused an evil mind of hate against them. Sāriputta, such was my abiding in equanimity.

Mahā-sīhanāda Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.77–79, trans. G.A.S.

Pain in vain *L.13*

In this passage, the Buddha explains that, prior to his period of extreme asceticism, he realised that awakening was not possible for those religious practitioners who were still attached to sensual pleasures. Having realised that he had to shun sensual pleasures, he then engaged in many kinds of extreme ascetic practices. However, while these did develop great energy and mindfulness, and the physical pain they brought did not affect his mind, they also brought bodily exhaustion, and he came to realize that they were not leading to awakening.

'Has there never arisen in you, Venerable Gotama, a feeling so pleasant that it could invade his mind and remain? Has there never arisen in Venerable Gotama a feeling so painful that it could invade his mind and remain?'

'Aggivessana, searching for what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I wandered by stages through the Magadhan country until eventually I arrived at Uruvelā near Senānigama. There I saw an agreeable piece of ground, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. Aggivessana, I considered: "Agreeable is this piece of ground; delightful is the grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. This place will indeed serve for the striving (spiritual exertion) of a clansman intent on striving." Aggivessana, I sat down there with the thought: "This will serve for striving."

Aggivessana, now these three similes occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. [Namely that, just as a submerged or damp piece of sappy wood cannot be set alight with a fire-drill, but a dry one can be set alight, so only] those renunciants and brahmins[71] who live bod-

71 See LI.2, above.

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ily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, and whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has been fully abandoned and suppressed internally, whether or not they feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowing and seeing and supreme awakening. ...

Aggivessana, I considered: "Suppose, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrain, and crush mind with mind?" Aggivessana, so with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained, and crushed mind with mind. Aggivessana, while I did so, sweat ran from my armpits. Aggivessana, just as a strong man might seize a weaker man by the head or shoulders and beat him down, constrain him, and crush him, so too, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained, and crushed mind with mind, and sweat ran from my armpits.

[Refrain:] Aggivessana, although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and strained because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

Aggivessana, I considered: "Suppose I practise the breathless meditation?"[72] So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nose. Aggivessana, while I did so, there was a loud sound of winds coming out from my ear holes. Aggivessana, just as there is a loud sound when a smith's bellows are blown, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my nose and ears, there was a loud sound of winds coming out from my ear holes. ... *[Refrain]*

Aggivessana, I considered: "Suppose I practise further the breathless meditation?" So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, violent winds cut through my head. Aggivessana, just as if a strong man were pressing against my head with the tip of a sharp sword, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, violent winds cut through my head. ... *[Refrain]*

Aggivessana, I considered: "Suppose I practise further the breathless meditation?" So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so there were violent pains in my head. Aggivessana, just as if a strong man were tightening a tough leather strap around my head as a headband, so too while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, there were violent pains in my head. ... *[Refrain]*

Aggivessana, I considered: "Suppose I practise further the breathless meditation?" So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, violent winds carved up my belly. Aggivessana, just as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up an ox's belly with a sharp butcher's knife, so too while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, violent winds carved up my belly. ... *[Refrain]*

72 A form of non-Buddhist meditation involving holding one's breath.

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Aggivessana, I considered: "Suppose I practise further the breathless meditation?" So I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears. While I did so, there was a violent burning in my body. Aggivessana, just as if two strong men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and roast him over a pit of hot coals, so too, while I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nose, and ears, there was a violent burning in my body. ... *[Refrain]*

Aggivessana, now the gods who saw me said: "The renunciant Gotama is dead." Some gods said: "The renunciant Gotama is not dead, he is dying." And other gods said: "The renunciant Gotama is neither dead nor dying; he is an arahant (worthy one), for such is the way arahants dwell."

Aggivessana, I considered: "Suppose I practise entirely cutting off food?"[73] Then gods came to me and said: "Sir, do not practise entirely cutting off food. If you do so, we shall infuse heavenly food into the pores of your skin and this will sustain you." Aggivessana, I considered: "If I claim to be completely fasting while these gods infuse heavenly food into the pores of my skin and this sustains me, then I shall be lying." So I dismissed those gods, saying: "There is no need."

Aggivessana, I considered: "Suppose I take very little food, a handful each time, whether of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup?" So I took very little food, a handful each time, whether of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup. While I did so, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation. Because of eating so little: my limbs became like the jointed segments of vine stems or bamboo stems; my backside became like a camel's hoof; the projections on my spine stood forth like corded beads; my ribs jutted out as gaunt as the crazy rafters of an old roofless barn; the gleam of my eyes sank far down in their sockets, looking like the gleam of water that has sunk far down in a deep well; my scalp shrivelled and withered as a green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun.

Aggivessana, because of eating so little, my belly skin adhered to my backbone; thus if I touched my belly skin I encountered my backbone and if I touched my backbone I encountered my belly skin. Aggivessana, because of eating so little, if I defecated or urinated, I fell over on my face there. Aggivessana, because of eating so little, if I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair, rotted at its roots, fell from my body as I rubbed.

Aggivessana, now the people who saw me said: "The renunciant Gotama is black." Some people said: "The renunciant Gotama is not black; he is brown." Other people said: "The renunciant Gotama is neither black nor brown; he is golden-skinned." Aggivessana, so much had the clear, bright colour of my skin deteriorated through eating so little.

Aggivessana, I considered: "Whatever renunciants and brahmins in the past have experienced painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost; there is none beyond this. And whatever renunciants and brahmins in the future will experience painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost; there is none be-

73 Abstinence from food, a non-Buddhist practice.

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yond this. And whatever renunciants and brahmins at present experience painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, this is the utmost; there is none beyond this.

But by this racking practice of austerities I have not attained any superhuman distinction in knowing and seeing worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to awakening?

Mahā-saccaka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.240–246, trans. G.A.S.

L.14 Rebuffing the temptation of Māra

In this passage, the tempter-deity Māra (also known as Namucī and Kaṇha; see LI.5 and 7) comes to Gotama (not yet a Buddha) at the end of his ascetic period, urging him to give up his renunciant life-style, and return to normal lay life in which he could generate beneficial karma and its worldly benefits by carrying out Brahmanical sacrifices. Gotama, though, says he has no need of any more beneficial karma (not that doing sacrifices would add to this), and that he is set to attain awakening and teach many disciples. He has the five faculties of faith, vigour, mindfulness, meditative concentration and wisdom, and will conquer Māra's 'army' of moral and spiritual faults.

Devoting to striving, while I was meditating near the river Nerañjarā, making a great effort, for the attainment of the security from bondage,

Namucī approached me, uttering seemingly compassionate words!: 'You are thin, of bad complexion; death is near you.

There are one thousand parts of death in you; only one part of you is life. Live, sir, life is better. If you live, you will make beneficial karma.

Practising the holy life and performing the fire sacrifice, you could heap up much beneficial karma. What do you want with striving?

The road to striving is hard to travel, hard to perform, hard to achieve.' Saying these verses, Māra stood near the Buddha.

To Māra who spoke thus, the Blessed One said this: 'Kinsman of the negligent, evil one, you have come here for your own purpose.

I do not have even the slightest need of (more) beneficial karma; Māra ought to speak to those who do have the need of it.

Faith, vigour, and wisdom are found in me. Why do you ask me, one who is thus devoted to striving, about life?

This wind would dry up even the streams of the rivers; why should my blood, of one devoted to striving, not be dried up?

When my blood is being dried up, then the bile and phlegm are dried up. When the flesh wastes away, the mind becomes clearer, and all the more my mindfulness and wisdom and meditative concentration stand firm.

While I dwell like this, having reached the highest feeling, my mind has no regard for sensual pleasures. See a being's pure state.

Sensual pleasures are your first army; discontent is called your second; your third is hunger and thirst; the fourth is called craving.

Dullness and lethargy are your fifth; the sixth is called fear; your seventh is vacillating doubt; hypocrisy and obstinacy are your eighth.

Gain, reputation, honour, and whatever fame is falsely received, and whoever both extols himself and disparages others, that is your army.

Namucī, that is the striking force of Kaṇha. One who is not a hero cannot conquer it, but having conquered it one obtains happiness.

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Should I wear *muñja* grass?[74] I've had enough of life here. Death in battle is better for me than that I should be conquered and live.

Plunged into this battle some renunciants and brahmins are not seen, and they do not know the road by which those with good vows go.

Seeing the army arrayed all around, and Māra with his elephants, I shall go forth into battle. Do not move me from my place.

That army of yours which the world together with the gods cannot overcome, I shall break with wisdom, as if breaking an unfired pot with a stone.

Bringing my thoughts under control, making my mindfulness well-established, I shall wander from kingdom to kingdom, training many disciples.

Those vigilant devoted performers of my teaching will go, despite you, to where, having gone, they will not grieve.'

(Māra:) For seven years I have followed the Blessed One step by step. I have not obtained an opportunity against the perfectly awakened Buddha who possesses mindfulness.

I once saw a bird circling a stone which looked like fat, thinking: "Perhaps we shall find something soft here; perhaps there may be something sweet."

Not obtaining anything sweet, the bird went away from there. Like the crow that attacked the stone and became despondent, we, after attacking Gotama and becoming despondent, will go away.'

Overcome by grief, the lute fell from Māra's armpit, and that discouraged spirit disappeared on that very spot.

Padhāna Sutta: *Sutta-nipāta* 425–449, trans. G.A.S.

The awakening and its aftermath

Attaining the meditative absorptions, seeing past lives and the working of karma, and attaining liberation *L.15*

*In this passage the Buddha recalls his awakening/enlightenment. After his ascetic period, and nearly giving up, he had wondered if there was another, effective way to awakening. At that point, he remembered a meditative state he had entered some time in his youth: the first of four meditative absorptions (*jhānas*: see Th.140), which was happy and joyful, but nothing to do with sensual pleasures or any negative state of mind. He thus decided to revisit this state as a way through to awakening. Given that it is clear from other passages that this would have been attained by a practice such as mindfulness of breathing, we can see that his path now became one of careful* awareness *of the body, rather than attaining formless states which completely* transcended *the body, or extreme asceticism that went for forceful and wilful* mastery *of the body.*

He then regained physical health by ending his fast, so that he could go on to attain the four meditative absorptions in turn, then from the great stillness and sensitivity of the fourth absorption, remembered many of his countless

74 A sign of surrender.

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past lives, saw how other beings were then being reborn according to the quality of their karma, their actions, and then, most crucially, attained direct insight into the painful nature of conditioned existence, what originated such states and their mental and physical pains, how they end, and the path to this: these four Truths of the Noble Ones (often called 'Noble Truths') later became the subject of his first teaching. Insight into the third of them entailed the realization of nirvana, and hence the ending of the intoxicating inclinations that are a barrier to this. He thus saw that he was now awakened. He was a Buddha.

Aggivesana, I considered: 'I recall that when my father the Sakyan was occupied, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered and dwelled in the first meditative absorption, which is comprised of the joy and easeful pleasure associated with mental application and examination, and born of seclusion. Could this be the path to awakening?' Aggivessana, then following on that memory was the realization: 'This indeed is the path to awakening.'

Aggivessana, I considered: 'Why am I afraid of that easeful pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states?' Aggivessana, I considered: 'I am not afraid of that easeful pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states.'

Aggivessana, I considered: 'It is not easy to attain that easeful pleasure with a body so excessively emaciated. Suppose I ate some solid food: some boiled rice and porridge?' And I ate some solid food: some boiled rice and porridge.

Aggivessana, now at that time five monks were waiting upon me,[75] thinking: 'If our renunciant Gotama achieves some higher state, he will inform us.' But, Aggivessana, when I ate the boiled rice and porridge, the five monks were disgusted and left me, thinking: 'The renunciant Gotama now lives luxuriously; he has given up his striving and reverted to luxury.'

Aggivessana, when I had eaten solid food and regained my strength, then, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered and dwelled in the first meditative absorption, which is comprised of the joy and easeful pleasure associated with mental application and examination, But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

With the stilling of mental application and examination, I entered and dwelled in the second meditative absorption, which is comprised of the joy and easeful pleasure born from a composed, concentrated state, devoid of mental application and examination, bringing inner clarity, being a one-pointed state of mind. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

With non-attachment towards joy, I dwelled with equanimity, being mindful and with clear comprehension, I experienced happiness with the body; and I entered and dwelled in the third meditative absorption of which the noble ones declare: 'he is possessed of equanimity, he

75 Who later became the Buddha's first disciples once they had the good fortune to be his audience for his first discourse.

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is mindful, a person abiding in happiness.' But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

Having previously given up pleasure and pain, with the disappearance of happiness and unhappiness, I entered and dwelled in the fourth meditative absorption, which is without any pleasant or painful (feeling) and purified by equanimity and mindfulness. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

When my mind was thus composed, purified, bright, without blemish, the defilements removed, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives. I recollected my manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many eons of world-contraction, many eons of world-expansion, many eons of world-contraction and expansion: 'There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my lifespan; and passing away from there, I was reborn elsewhere; and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my lifespan; and passing away from there, I was reborn here.'

Thus with their aspects and particulars I recollected (many of) my manifold past lives. Aggivessana, this was the first true knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who dwells diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

When my mind was thus composed, purified, bright, without blemish, the defilements removed, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings. With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and being reborn, of a low or high status, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and I understood how beings fare on according to their actions (karma) thus: 'These beings who behaved wrongly by body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong view, and undertook actions based on wrong view, with the dissolution of the body, after death, have been reborn in a state of misery, in a bad destination, in the lower world, even in hell; but these beings who behaved well by body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right view, and undertook action based on right view, with the breakup of the body, after death, have been reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.'

Thus with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and being reborn, of a low or high status, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and I understood how beings fare on according to their actions. Aggivessana, this was the second true knowledge attained by me in the middle watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in a one who dwells diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

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When my mind was thus composed, purified, bright, without blemish, the defilements removed, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to knowledge of the destruction of the intoxicating inclinations.[76] I directly knew as it really is: 'This is the painful'; 'this is the origin of the painful'; 'this is the cessation of the painful'; 'this is the way leading to the cessation of the painful'.

I directly knew as it really is: 'These are the intoxicating inclinations'; 'this is the origin of the intoxicating inclinations'; 'this is the cessation of the intoxicating inclinations'; 'this is the way leading to the cessation of the intoxicating inclinations'.

When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the intoxicating inclination to sensual desire, from the intoxicating inclination to a way of being, and from the intoxicating inclination to ignorance.

When it was liberated, there came the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' I directly knew: 'Birth[77] is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, and there is nothing more to be done hereafter.'

Aggivessana, this was the third true knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who dwells diligent, ardent, and resolute. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.

Mahā-saccaka Sutta: *Majjhima-nikāya* I.246–249, trans. G.A.S.

L.16 Joy at finding the end of wandering on from life to life

Here the Buddha expresses joy at having identified and ended the craving that had been driving him, like all beings, through repeated rebirths and the mental and physical pains that these bring.

Through many a birth I wandered in saṃsāra,[78] seeking, but not finding the builder of the house.[79] Painful is repeated birth.

O house-builder! You are seen. You shall build no house again. All your rafters are broken. Your ridge-pole is shattered. Mind is free from volitional constructions. Achieved is the destruction of cravings.

Dhammapada 153–154, trans. G.A.S.

L.17 Attaining nirvana on reaching awakening/enlightenment

Monks, searching for what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I wandered by stages through the Magadhan country until eventually I arrived at Uruvelā near Senānigama. There I saw an agreeable piece of ground, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort.

Monks, I considered: 'This is an agreeable piece of ground; this is a

76 So as to be an *arahant*, awakened/enlightened. See Th.128 on the intoxicating inclinations.

77 I.e. rebirth, and the whole future process of the birth and death of impermanent, conditioned states.

78 The cycle of birth and death.

79 Of personal conditioned existence.

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delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. This will serve for the striving of a clansman intent on striving.' And I sat down there, thinking: 'This will serve for striving.'

Monks, then being myself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, seeking the unborn supreme security from bondage, nirvana, I attained the unborn supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being myself subject to ageing, having understood the danger in what is subject to ageing, seeking the unageing supreme security from bondage, nirvana, I attained the unageing supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being myself subject to sickness, having understood the danger in what is subject to sickness, seeking the unailing supreme security from bondage, nirvana, I attained the unailing supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being myself subject to death, having understood the danger in what is subject to death, seeking the deathless supreme security from bondage, nirvana, I attained the deathless supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being myself subject to sorrow, having understood the danger in what is subject to sorrow, seeking sorrowless supreme security from bondage, nirvana, I attained the sorrowless supreme security from bondage, nirvana; being myself subject to defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to defilement, seeking the undefiled supreme security from bondage, nirvana, I attained the undefiled supreme security from bondage, nirvana.

The knowing and seeing arose in me: 'My liberation is unshakable. This is my last birth. Now there is no more repeated being.'

Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.166–167, trans. G.A.S.

The rediscovery of an ancient path *L.18*

In the passage, the Buddha compares his discovery of the noble eightfold path, which goes to the cessation of the painful bundle of ageing and death etc., as like the re-discovery of a path to a forgotten ancient city. Like other long-past Buddhas before him, he had discovered the path to nirvana, and taught it to others.

Monks, suppose a man wandering through a forest would see an ancient path, an ancient road travelled upon by people in the past. He would follow it and would see an ancient city, an ancient capital that had been inhabited by people in the past, with parks, groves, ponds, and ramparts, a delightful place. Then the man would inform the king or a royal minister of this and say: '... Sire, renovate that city!' Then the king or the royal minister would renovate the city, and some time later that city would become successful and prosperous, well populated, filled with people, attained to growth and expansion.

Monks, so too I saw the ancient path, the ancient road travelled by the perfectly awakened Buddhas of the past. What is that ancient path, that ancient road? It is just this noble eightfold path namely: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditative concentration.

I followed that path and by doing so I have directly known ageing and death, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation. ...

Having directly known them, I have explained them to the monks,

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nuns, the male and female lay followers. Monks, this holy life has become successful and prosperous, extended, popular, widespread, well proclaimed among gods and humans.

Nagara Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.105–107, trans. G.A.S.

L.19 Honouring the Dhamma

*Here the Buddha sees that there is no person he can honour as superior to him in spiritual qualities, but that he should honour the Dhamma he has awakened to. The deity Brahmā Sahampati, a long-lived 'non-returner' who had been taught by a past Buddha (*Saṃyutta-nikāya *V.232–233), appears to him and confirms that all Buddhas honour Dhamma.*

On one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly awakened, he was staying at Uruvelā on the bank of the river Nerañjarā, at the foot of the Goatherd's Banyan tree. Then while he was alone and in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in his mind: 'One suffers if dwelling without reverence or deference. Now on what renunciant or brahmin can I dwell in dependence, honouring and respecting him?'

Then the Blessed One considered: 'It would be for the sake of perfecting the unperfected body of ethical discipline that I would dwell in dependence on another renunciant or brahmin, honouring and respecting him. However, in this world with its gods, māras and brahmās, with its people, renunciants, brahmins, kings and the masses, I do not see another renunciant or brahmin more consummate in ethical discipline than I, on whom I could dwell in dependence, honouring and respecting him.

It would be for the sake of perfecting the unperfected body of meditative concentration ... the unperfected body of wisdom ... the unperfected body of liberation ... the unperfected body of knowing and seeing of liberation that I would dwell in dependence on another renunciant or brahmin ... However ... I do not see another renunciant or brahmin more consummate in these than I ...

What if I were to dwell in dependence on this very Dhamma to which I have fully awakened, honouring and respecting it?

Then, having known with his own mind the mind of the Blessed One, just as a strong man might extend his bent arm or bend his extended arm, Brahmā Sahampati disappeared from the Brahmā-world and reappeared in front of the Blessed One. Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he saluted the Blessed One with his hands before his heart and said to him: 'Blessed One, so it is! Fortunate One, so it is! ...

Awakened ones in the past, those in the future, and he who is the awakened one now, removing the sorrow of many,

All have dwelt, will dwell, dwell, revering the true Dhamma deeply. This, for Buddhas, is the standard law.

Hence, one who desires his own good, aspiring for greatness, should respect the true Dhamma deeply, recollecting the Buddhas' teaching.'

Gārava Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.138–140 <304–306>,[80] trans. G.A.S.

80 The Pali Text Society has two editions of volume I of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*; the page numbers of the newer one are shown in <> brackets.

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The achievements and nature of the Buddha

The *Tathāgata* L.20

This passage explains that the Buddha is the 'Tathāgata', *one who is Thus-gone or Thus-come.*[81] *The 'world'* (loka) *that the Buddha has transcended is elsewhere described as disintegrating processes of experience: six senses, sensory objects, sensory consciousness, and the feelings that arise conditioned by sensory contacts* (Saṃyutta-nikāya *IV.52), i.e. all that is in some way painful, however subtly so* (Saṃyutta-nikāya *IV.38–40).*

The world has been fully understood by the Tathāgata. From the world, the Tathāgata is unfettered. The origination of the world has been fully understood by the Tathāgata. The origination of the world has been abandoned by the Tathāgata. The cessation of the world has been fully understood by the Tathāgata. The cessation of the world has been realized by the Tathāgata. The path leading to the cessation of the world has been fully understood by the Tathāgata. The path leading to the cessation of the world has been developed by the Tathāgata.

Whatever in this world with its gods, māras and brahmās, with its people, renunciants, brahmins, kings and the masses, is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect, that has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

From the night the Tathāgata attains the unsurpassed full awakening, until the night (of his death when) he attains final nirvana in the nirvana-element with no fuel remaining, whatever the Tathāgata has said, spoken, explained is just so (*tath'eva*) and not otherwise. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

In accord with what the Tathāgata says is what he does (*tathā-kārī*), and in accord with what he does is what he says (*tathā-vādī*). Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

In this world with its gods, māras and brahmās, with its people, renunciants, brahmins, kings and the masses, the Tathāgata is the unvanquished victor, the all-seeing, the wielder of power. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

Loka Sutta: Itivuttaka 121–122, trans. G.A.S.

The *Tathāgata* as the one person that causes many good things to appear L.21

Monks, there is one person who arises in the world for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans. Who is that one person? It is the Tathāgata, the arahant (worthy one), the perfectly awakened Buddha. This is that one person.

Monks, there is one person arising in the world who is hard to obtain ... who arises as a man of marvels ... whose passing away is a distress for the many ... who is unique, without a peer, without counterpart, in-

81 See LI.4 for this term, which generally refers to the Buddha.

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comparable, unequalled, matchless, unrivalled, the best of humans. Who is that one person? It is the Tathāgata, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha. This is that one person.

Monks, the appearance of one person is the appearance of great vision, of great light, of great radiance ... it is the appearance of the six things unsurpassed ... the realization of the fourfold analytical knowledge ... the penetration of the various elements, of the diversity of elements; ... it is the realization of the fruit that is knowledge and freedom ... the realization of the fruits that are stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship. Who is that one person? It is the Tathāgata, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha. This is that one person. Monks, the appearance of this one person is the appearance of all these.

The Ones, *suttas* 171–187: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.22–23, trans. G.A.S.

L.22 The powers of the Buddha

This passage is part of the Buddha's response when a disgruntled ex-monk slanders him by saying that he teaches based only on reasoning, and lacks any supernormal higher knowledge.

Sāriputta, this foolish man Sunakkhatta will never understand me in line with the Dhamma: "That Blessed One encompasses with his own mind the minds of other beings and other persons: he understands a mind affected by lust as affected by lust, a mind unaffected by lust as unaffected by lust [and likewise a mind affected by or unaffected by hate or delusion]; he understands a contracted mind as contracted, a distracted mind as distracted; he understands an exalted mind as exalted, an unexalted mind as unexalted; ... he understands a composed mind as composed, an uncomposed mind as uncomposed; he understands a liberated mind as liberated, an unliberated mind as unliberated."

Sāriputta, the Tathāgata has these ten Tathāgata's powers, possessing which he claims the herd-leader's place, roars his lion's roar in the assemblies, and sets rolling the wheel of Brahmā.[82] What are the ten?

Sāriputta, here the Tathāgata understands as it really is the possible as possible; the impossible as impossible. That is a Tathāgata's power that the Tathāgata has, by virtue of which he claims the herd-leader's place, roars his lion's roar in the assemblies, and sets rolling the wheel of Brahmā. Sāriputta, here the Tathāgata understands as it really is: the results of actions undertaken, past, future, and present, by way of possibilities and causes; ... the ways leading to all (rebirth) destinations; ... the world with its many and different elements; ... how beings have different inclinations; ... disposition of the faculties of other beings, other persons; ... the defilement, the cleansing, and the emergence in regard to the meditative absorptions, liberations, concentrations, and attainments. ...

Sāriputta, here the Tathāgata recollects his manifold past lives: one birth, two births ... many eons of world contraction and expansion ...

82 I.e. the 'supreme' wheel of Dhamma.

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Thus with their aspects and particulars he recollects his manifold past lives. ...

Sāriputta, with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, the Tathāgata sees beings passing away and reappearing, of a low or high status, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate and understands how beings pass on according to their actions. ...

Sāriputta, by realizing for himself with direct insight, the Tathāgata here and now enters upon and abides in the freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom that are without intoxicating inclinations, with the destruction of the intoxicating inclinations. That too is a Tathāgata's power that the Tathāgata has, by virtue of which he claims the herd-leader's place, roars his lion's roar in the assemblies, and sets rolling the wheel of Brahmā.

Mahā-sīhanāda Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.69–71, trans. G.A.S.

The Buddha as the originator of the path which his disciples follow *L.23*

Monks, through disenchantment with form, feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness,[83] through their fading away and cessation, the Tathāgata, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, is freed by non-clinging; he is called the perfectly awakened Buddha. The same applies to a monk liberated by wisdom ...

Monks, the Tathāgata, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, is the originator of the path unarisen before, the producer of the path unproduced before, the declarer of the path undeclared before. He is the knower of the path, the discoverer of the path, the one skilled in the path. And his disciples now dwell following that path and become possessed of it afterwards.

Sambuddha Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya III.65–66, trans. G.A.S.

The appearance of the Buddha brings great light *L.24*

Monks, so long as the moon and the sun have not arisen in the world, for just so long there is no appearance of great light and radiance, but then blinding darkness prevails, a dense mass of darkness; for just so long day and night are not discerned, the month and fortnight are not discerned, the seasons and the year are not discerned.

But, monks, when the moon and the sun arise in the world, then ... [these appear and are discerned].

Monks, so too, so long as the Tathāgata has not arisen in the world, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, for just so long there is no appearance of great light and radiance, but then blinding darkness prevails, a dense mass of darkness; for just so long there is no explaining, teaching, proclaiming, establishing, disclosing, analysing, or elucidating of the four Truths of the Noble Ones.[84]

But, monks, when the Tathāgata arises in the world ... [then these appear and the Truths of the Noble Ones are disclosed].

Suriya Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.442–43, trans. G.A.S.

83 The five kinds of processes making up a person: see Th.151.
84 See L.27.

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The Buddha as teacher

L.25 Decision to teach

In this passage, the Buddha hesitates to teach Dhamma, as he thinks that no-one else will be able to understand its profundity. However, at the request of Brahmā Sahampati (on whom, see L.19), he decides to teach after having seen that there are *some who will understand.*

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Uruvelā, on the river Nerañjarā at the foot of the Goatherd's Banyan tree, having just realized the full awakening. Then, while being alone and in seclusion, the Blessed One considered: 'This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful, sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. But this population delights in clinging, enjoys clinging, and rejoices in clinging. It is hard for such a population to see this state, namely, specific conditionality, dependent arising.[85] And it is hard to see this state, namely, the stilling of all volitional activities, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, non-attachment, cessation, nirvana. If I were to teach the Dhamma, others would not understand me, and that would be wearying and troublesome for me.'

Thus when the Blessed One was considering, his mind inclined towards inaction, to not teaching the Dhamma. Thereupon, there came to the Blessed One spontaneously these verses never heard before:

What is the point of trying to teach the Dhamma that even I found hard to reach? – For it is not easily understood by those who live in lust and hate.

Those dyed in lust, wrapped in darkness, will never discern that which goes against the worldly stream, fine, profound, difficult to see and subtle.

Considering thus, the Blessed One's mind inclined to inaction rather than to teaching the Dhamma.

Then Brahmā Sahampati knew with his mind the thought in the mind of the Blessed One and considered: 'The world will be lost; the world will perish; since the mind of the Tathāgata, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, inclines to inaction rather than to teaching the Dhamma.'

Then, just as quickly as a strong man might extend his bent arm or bend his extended arm, Brahmā Sahampati vanished from the Brahmā world and appeared before the Blessed One. Brahmā Sahampati, arranged his upper robe on one shoulder, and extending his hands in reverential salutation toward the Blessed One, said: 'Venerable sir, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma, let the Fortunate One teach the Dhamma. There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who will perish if they were to not hear the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma.'

Brahmā Sahampati spoke thus, and then he said further:

In Magadha there have appeared till now impure teachings devised

85 See Th.156–68.

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by those still stained. Open the doors to the deathless! Let them hear the Dhamma that the stainless one has found.

Just as one who stands on a mountain peak can see below the people all around, so, O wise one, all-seeing sage, ascend the palace of the Dhamma. Let the sorrowless one survey this human breed, engulfed in sorrow, overcome by birth and old age.

Arise, victorious hero, caravan leader, debtless one, and wander in the world. Let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma, there will be those who will understand.

Then the Blessed One listened to the pleading of Brahmā, and out of compassion for the beings he surveyed the world with the eye of the awakened one. Surveying the world with the eye of the awakened one, he saw: beings with little dust in their eyes, beings with much dust in their eyes; beings with keen faculties, beings with dull faculties; beings with good qualities, beings with bad qualities; beings who are easy to teach; beings who are hard to teach; and some who dwell seeing fear in blame and in the next world.

Just as in a pond of blue or red or white lotuses: some lotuses that are born and grow in the water thrive immersed in the water without rising out of it; some other lotuses that are born and grow in the water rest on the water's surface; and some other lotuses that are born and grow in the water rise out of the water and stand clear, unwetted by it – so too, surveying the world with the eye of the awakened one, the Blessed One saw: beings with little dust in their eyes, beings with much dust in their eyes; beings with keen faculties; beings with dull faculties; beings with good qualities, beings with bad qualities; beings who are easy to teach and hard to teach, and some who dwell seeing fear in blame and in the next world.

Then he replied to Brahmā Sahampati in a verse:

Open for them are the doors to the deathless, let those with ears now release their faith. O Brahmā, thinking it would be troublesome, I did not speak the Dhamma subtle and sublime.

Then Brahmā Sahampati, thinking that the Blessed One had consented to his request that he would teach the Dhamma, departed at once, after paying homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on the right.

Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.167–169, trans. G.A.S.

The first to receive the Buddha's teaching *L.26*

In this passage, the Buddha thinks that the best people for him to teach first are the two people who taught him to attain the spheres of nothingness and of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka the son of Rāma (see L.10 and 11). When deities told him of their recent deaths, which he then confirmed by his meditative powers, he then thought of the five that he had previously practised asceticism with. On the way to teach them, he met a fatalist ascetic who was unimpressed by his claims to awakening. On approaching the five ascetics, they at first resolved to snub him, due to his abandoning asceticism, but his repeated affirmation of his attainment showed them that a change had come over him, and they then accepted his teaching, until they too attained awakening.

Monks, I considered thus: 'To whom should I first teach the Dhamma?

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Who will understand the Dhamma quickly?' Monks, then I considered: 'Āḷāra Kālāma is wise, intelligent, and discerning; he has long had little dust in his eyes. Suppose I taught the Dhamma first to Āḷāra Kālāma. He will understand it quickly.' Monks, then the deities approached me and said: 'Venerable sir, Āḷāra Kālāma died seven days ago.' And the knowing and seeing arose in me: Āḷāra Kālāma died seven days ago. Monks, I considered: 'Āḷāra Kālāma was a great discerner. If he had heard this Dhamma, he would have understood it quickly.'

Monks, I considered thus: 'To whom should I first teach the Dhamma? Who will understand the Dhamma quickly?' Monks, then I considered: 'Uddaka the son of Rāma is wise, intelligent, and discerning; he has long had little dust in his eyes. Suppose I taught the Dhamma first to Uddaka the son of Rāma. He will understand it quickly.' Monks, then the deities approached me and said: 'Venerable sir, Uddaka the son of Rāma died last night.' And the knowing and seeing arose in me: Uddaka the son of Rāma died last night. Monks, I considered: 'Uddaka the son of Rāma was a great discerner. If he had heard this Dhamma, he would have understood it quickly.'

Monks, I considered thus: 'To whom should I first teach the Dhamma? Who will understand the Dhamma quickly?' Monks, then I considered: 'The monks of the group of five who attended upon me while I was engaged in my striving were very helpful. Suppose I taught the Dhamma first to them.

Monks, then I considered: 'Where are the monks of the group of five now living?' Monks, with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw the group of five living at Varanasi in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Monks, then when I had stayed at Uruvelā as long as I chose, I set out to wander by stages to Varanasi.

Monks, the Ājīvaka Upaka saw me proceeding on the road between the Bodhi-tree and Gayā. He spoke to me: 'Friend, your sense faculties are clear; the colour of your skin is pure and bright. Friend, under whom have you gone forth? Or who is your teacher? Or whose Dhamma do you profess?' Monks, being spoken so, I replied to the Ājīvaka Upaka in verses:

I am one who has transcended all, a knower of all, unsullied among all things, renouncing all, released by the cessation of craving. Having known this all for myself, to whom should I point as teacher?

I have no teacher; there is none like me; in the world with its gods, there is no counterpart.

Indeed I am the arahant in the world; I am the teacher supreme. I am the only perfectly awakened Buddha; I am one with fires quenched and extinguished.

I go now to the city of Kāsi to set in motion the wheel of the Dhamma. In a world that has become blind, I will beat the drum of the deathless.

(Upaka:) Friend, as you claim, you ought to be the infinite victor.

(The Buddha:) The victorious ones are those like me who have won the destruction of intoxicating inclinations. I have vanquished all evil states; therefore, Upaka, I am a victorious one.

Monks, when this was said, the Ājīvaka Upaka, saying 'Friend, may it be so', shaking his head, taking a bypath, departed.

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Monks, then wandering by stages, I eventually came to Varanasi, to the Deer Park at Isipatana, and I approached the monks of the group of five. Monks, the monks of the group of five, seeing me coming in the distance, agreed among themselves: 'Friend, here comes the renunciant Gotama who lives luxuriously, who gave up his striving and reverted to luxury. We should not pay homage to him or rise up for him or receive his bowl and robe. But a seat may be prepared so that if he likes, he may sit down.' Monks, however, as I approached, the monks of the group of five found themselves unable to keep their pact. Some came to meet me and took my bowl and robe; some prepared a seat; some set out water for my feet; however, they addressed me by name and as 'friend'.

Monks, thereupon I told the monks of the group of five: 'Monks, do not address the Tathāgata by name and as "friend". The Tathāgata is the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha. Monks, listen, the deathless has been attained! I shall instruct you, I shall teach you Dhamma. Practising as you are instructed, by realizing it for yourselves here and now through higher knowledge[86] you will soon enter and dwell in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness.'

Monks, when this was said, the monks of the groups of five said this me: 'Friend Gotama, by the conduct, the practice, and the austerities that you undertook, you did not achieve any superhuman distinction in knowing and seeing worthy of the noble ones. Since you now live luxuriously, having given up your striving and reverted to luxury, how could you have achieved any superhuman distinction in knowing and seeing worthy of the noble ones?'

Monks, when this was said, I told the monks of the group of five: 'Monks, the Tathāgata does not live luxuriously, nor has he given up his striving and reverted to luxury. The Tathāgata is an arahant, a perfectly awakened Buddha. Monks, listen, the deathless has been attained! I shall instruct you, I shall teach you Dhamma. Practising as you are instructed, by realizing it for yourselves here and now through higher knowledge you will soon enter and dwell in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness.

Monks, a second time the monks of the group of five said to me: 'Friend Gotama ... how could you have achieved any superhuman distinction in knowing and seeing worthy of the noble ones?' Monks, when this was said, for the second time too I told the monks of the group of five: 'Monks, the Tathāgata does not live luxuriously ... I shall instruct you ... you will soon enter and dwell in that supreme goal'

Monks, a third time the monks of the group of five said to me: 'Friend Gotama ... how could you have achieved any superhuman distinction in knowing and seeing worthy of the noble ones?' Monks, when this was said I asked the monks of the group of five: 'Monks, have you ever known me to insist like this before?' 'No, venerable sir.' 'Monks, the

86 Direct insight as super-normal knowing arising from a meditatively attuned mind.

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Tathāgata is the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha. Monks, listen, the deathless has been attained! I shall instruct you, I shall teach you Dhamma. Practising as you are instructed, by realizing it for yourselves here and now through higher knowledge, you will soon enter and dwell in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from home life into homelessness.'

Monks, I was able to convince the monks of the group of five. Monks, then I sometimes instructed two monks while the other three went for collecting alms, and the six of us lived on what those three monks brought back from their alms-round. Monks, sometimes I instructed three monks while the other two went for collecting alms, and the six of us lived on what those two monks brought back from their alms-round.

Monks, then the monks of the group of five, thus taught and instructed by me, being themselves subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, seeking the unborn supreme security from bondage, nirvana, attained the unborn supreme security from bondage, nirvana. They, being themselves subject to ageing, having understood the danger in what is subject to ageing, seeking the unageing supreme security from bondage, nirvana, attained the unageing supreme security from bondage, nirvana. They, being themselves subject to sickness ... attained the unageing supreme security from bondage, nirvana. They, being themselves subject to death ... attained the deathless supreme security from bondage, nirvana. They, being themselves subject to sorrow ... attained the sorrowless supreme security from bondage. They, being themselves subject to defilement ... attained the undefiled supreme security from bondage, nirvana.

The knowing and seeing arose in the monks of the group of five: 'Our release is unshakable; this is our last birth; now there is no more renewed being.'

Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.167–173, trans. G.A.S.

L.27 The first discourse: The Setting in Motion of the Dhamma-wheel

This passage is the famous first discourse of the Buddha. It introduces the Buddhist path as a 'middle way' between the extremes of sensual indulgence and extreme asceticism, and then focuses on 1) various aspects of life that entail mental or physical pain, so as to be 'the painful' (dukkha *– as more fully explained in passages Th.150–152), 2) how these arise from craving, or demanding desires, and 3) cease with the end of craving, which is 4) attained by practice of the noble eightfold path. At the end of this teaching, one of the Buddha's audience gains an experiential realization based on it: he gains the 'vision of Dhamma' or 'Dhamma-eye', a direct insight into the reality-pattern* (dhamma) *that anything that arises will in time cease. In particular, the painful phenomena that arise from craving will cease when craving ends. The gaining of the Dhamma-eye marks the attainment of at least stream-entry: becoming the kind of spiritually ennobled person (noble one) that will attain full awakening in a maximum of seven more lives. The noble ones are those with deep spiritual insight, so as to be partially or fully awakened/enlightened (see Th.201). For them, the most significant truths, in the sense of aspects of reality, are painful phenomena, what causes them, the transcending of what is*

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painful, and the path to this; these are the four 'Truths of the Noble Ones'.[87] *The discourse ends with news of the Buddha's 'turning of the Dhamma-wheel', by transmitting insight into Dhamma, spreading up to the various kinds of deities.*

Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Varanasi in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Blessed One addressed the monks of the group of five thus: 'Monks, these two extremes should not be followed by one gone forth (into the homeless life). What two? That which is this pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, the way of the ordinary person, ignoble, not connected to the goal; and that which is this pursuit of self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, not connected to the goal. Monks, without veering towards either of these two extremes, the Tathāgata has awakened to the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to higher knowledge, to full awakening, to nirvana.

And what, monks, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathāgata, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to higher knowledge, to full awakening, to nirvana? It is just this noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditative concentration. This, monks, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathāgata, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to higher knowledge, to full awakening, to nirvana.

Now *this*, monks, is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the painful: birth is painful, ageing is painful, illness is painful, death is painful; sorrow, lamentation, (physical) pain, unhappiness and distress are painful; union with what is disliked is painful; separation from what is liked is painful; not to get what one wants is painful; in brief, the five grasped-at categories of existence[88] are painful.

Now *this*, monks, is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the origin of the painful. It is this craving which leads to repeated existence, accompanied by delight and attachment, seeking delight now here, now there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being (something), craving for (something's) non-existence.

Now *this*, monks, is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of the painful. It is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it.[89]

Now *this*, monks, is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful. It is this noble eightfold path, that is

87 Often translated as 'Noble Truths', but this is misleading, as they are four realities, the second of which is described in this passage as 'to be abandoned'; only if it was a truth *about* the origin of what is painful could it be 'noble', but if so, it would not need to be abandoned.

88 The kinds of physical and mental processes making up a person, that one grasps at in vain as supposedly being, or being possessed by, a permanent self.

89 That is: giving up the thirst for the 'next thing', and giving oneself fully to what is here, now; abandoning attachments, past, present or future; freedom that comes from contentment; not relying on craving so that the mind does not settle down in anything, sticking to it, roosting there.

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to say, right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditative concentration.

"This is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the painful": in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light. Now on this, "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the painful – is to be fully understood": in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight, and light. Now on this, "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the painful – has been fully understood": in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light.

(Likewise,) in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light, with respect to: "This is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the origin of the painful", "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the origin of the painful – is to be abandoned", and "This – Truth of the Noble Ones that is the origin of the painful – has been abandoned."

(Likewise,) in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light, with respect to: "This is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of the painful", "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of the painful – is to be personally experienced" and "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of the painful – has been personally experienced".

(Likewise,) in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light, with respect to: "This is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful", "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful – is to be developed", and "This the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful – has been developed."

So long, monks, as my knowing and seeing of these four Truths of the Noble Ones, as they really are in their three phases (each) and twelve modes (altogether) was not thoroughly purified in this way, then so long, in the world with its gods, māras and brahmās, with its people, renunciants, brahmins, kings and the masses, I did not claim to be fully awakened to the unsurpassed perfect awakening. But when, monks, my knowing and seeing of these four Truths of the Noble Ones, as they really are, in their three phases and twelve modes, was thoroughly purified in this way, then, in the world with its gods, māras and brahmās, with its people, renunciants, brahmins, kings and the masses, I claimed to be fully awakened to the unsurpassed perfect awakening. The knowledge and the vision arose in me: "Unshakeable is the liberation of my mind; this is my last birth: now there is no more rebirth."

This is what the Blessed One said. Elated, the monks of the group of five delighted in the Blessed One's statement. And while this explanation was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Koṇḍañña the dust-free, stainless vision of Dhamma: 'whatever is subject to origination, all that is subject to cessation.'

And when the Dhamma-wheel had been set in motion by the Blessed One, the earth-dwelling gods raised a cry: 'At Varanasi, in the Deer Park

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at Isipatana, the unsurpassed Dhamma-wheel has been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped by any renunciant or brahmin or māra or brahmā or by anyone in the world.' Having heard the cry of the earth-dwelling gods, the gods of the Four Great Kings raised the same cry. Having heard it, the Thirty-three gods took it up, then the Yāma gods, then the Contented (Tusita) gods, then the Delighting in Creating gods, then the gods who are Masters of the Creations of Others, and then the gods of the brahmā group.

Thus at that moment, at that instant, at that second, the cry spread as far as the brahmā world, and this ten thousandfold world-system shook, quaked, and trembled, and an immeasurable glorious radiance appeared in the world, surpassing the divine majesty of the gods.

Then the Blessed One uttered this inspiring utterance: 'The honourable Koṇḍañña has indeed understood! The honourable Koṇḍañña has indeed understood! In this way, the Venerable Koṇḍañña acquired the name Aññāta(Who Has Understood)-Koṇḍañña.

Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.420–424, trans. P.H.

Teacher of the Dhamma *L.28*

Great king, a Tathāgata arises in the world, an arahant, perfectly awakened Buddha, one endowed with knowledge and conduct, Fortunate One, knower of the worlds, incomparable trainer of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, awakened one, Blessed One. He, having realized it by his own higher knowledge, proclaims this world with its gods, māras and brahmās, with its people, renunciants, brahmins, rulers, and the masses. He teaches the Dhamma, which is good in its beginning, good in its middle, good in its culmination, with the right meaning and phrasing. He reveals the perfectly complete and purified holy life.

Sāmaññā-phala Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.62, trans. G.A.S.

Sending out sixty awakened disciples to teach the Dhamma *L.29*

This passage describes how the Buddha, having gathered sixty awakened disciples who were arahants *like himself, sends them out to compassionately teach Dhamma to others.*

At that time, there were sixty-one arahants in the world.

The Blessed One said this: 'Monks, I am free from all snares, both celestial and human. Monks, you too are free from all snares, both celestial and human. Monks, wander forth for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans. Let not two go the same way.

Monks, teach the Dhamma that is good in its beginning, good in its middle, good in its culmination, with the right meaning and phrasing. Reveal the perfectly complete and purified holy life. There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who will fall away if they were to not hear the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma.

Monks, I too will go to Senānigama in Uruvelā in order to teach the Dhamma.

Mahāvagga I.10–11: *Vinaya* I.20–21, trans. G.A.S.

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L.30 Ensuring that a man was not too hungry to understand the Dhamma

This passage illustrates the compassionate way in which the Buddha taught.

One day, as the teacher was seated in the Perfumed Chamber at Jeta Grove, surveying the world at dawn, he saw a certain poor man at Āḷavi. Perceiving that he had the basis for attainment, he surrounded himself with a company of five hundred monks and went to Āḷavi, where the inhabitants immediately invited the teacher to be their guest. The poor man also heard that the teacher had arrived and decided to go and hear him teach the Dhamma. But that very day an ox of his strayed off. So he reflected, 'Shall I seek the ox, or shall I go and hear the Dhamma?' And he decided, 'I will first seek the ox and then go and hear the Dhamma.' Accordingly, early in the morning, he set out to seek his ox.

The residents of Āḷavi provided seats for the Sangha of monks presided over by the Buddha, served them food, and after the meal took the teacher's bowl, that he might recite words of blessing. The teacher said, 'he for whose sake I came here a journey of thirty leagues has gone into the forest to seek his ox, which is lost. Not until he returns will I teach Dhamma.' And he held his peace.

While it was still day, the poor man found his ox and immediately drove it back to the herd. Then he thought, 'Even if I can do nothing else, I will at least pay my respects to the teacher.' Accordingly, though he was oppressed with pangs of hunger, he decided not to go home but went quickly to the teacher, and having paid respect to him, sat down to one side. When the poor man came and stood before the teacher, the teacher said to the steward of the alms, 'Is there any food remaining of that given to the Sangha of monks?' 'Venerable sir, the food has not been touched' 'Well then, serve this poor man with food.'

... A soon as the poor man's physical sufferings had been relieved, his mind became tranquil. Then the teacher taught the Dhamma the step-by-step discourse,[90] then pointed out the (four) Truths (of the Noble Ones). At the conclusion of the teaching, the poor man attained the fruition that is stream-entry. ... [Later the Buddha explained to the monks that he had known of the poor man's situation and had thought:] 'If I teach Dhamma to this man while he is suffering the pangs of hunger, he will not be able to understand it.'

Dhammapada commentary, III.261–63, trans. P.H.

L.31 A lowly person becomes honoured by gods through ordination and awakening

I was born in a humble family, poor, having little food; my work was lowly: I was a disposer of withered flowers.

Despised by men, disregarded and reviled, making my mind humble I paid homage to many people.

Then I saw the awakened one, revered by the Sangha of monks, the great hero, entering the supreme city of the Magadha people.

90 See L.34 and Th.28.

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Throwing down my carrying-pole, I approached to pay homage to him; out of sympathy for me the best of humans stood still.

Having paid homage to the teacher's feet, standing on one side I then asked the best of all living beings for admission into the monastic community.

Then the merciful teacher, sympathetic to the whole world, said to me: 'Come, monk.' That was my full admission.

Dwelling alone in the forest, not relaxing, I myself performed the teacher's bidding, just as the Victorious One had exhorted me.

For the first watch of the night I recollected my previous births; for the middle of the night, I purified my divine-eye[91]; in the last watch of the night, I tore asunder the mass of darkness.

Then at the end of the night, towards sunrise, (the gods) Inda (Sakka) and Brahmā came and revered me with cupped hands (saying):

'Homage to you thoroughbred of humans; homage to you, best of humans; to you whose intoxicating inclinations are annihilated; you are worthy of gifts, sir.'

Then seeing me revered by the assembly of gods, giving a smile the teacher said this:

'By austerity, by living the holy life, by self-restraint and self-taming, by this one is a brahmin; this is the supreme state of being a brahmin.'

Verses of Sunīta: *Theragāthā* 620–631, trans. G.A.S.

A skilful teacher: effort needs to be neither too taut nor too slack *L.32*

This passage illustrates the skilful way in which the Buddha taught. It concerns a recently ordained monk who was too forceful in the energy that he applied to meditative walking, and who nearly gives up being a monk as he gains no beneficial results. The Buddha advises him to approach things more gently, though not in a slack way. While this advice relates to a monk, it is of more general relevance to spiritual practice.

Because of the excessive application of vigour in pacing up and down the (skin of) Venerable Soṇa's feet broke, the place for pacing up and down became stained with blood as though there had been slaughter of cattle. Then the following thought arose in Venerable Soṇa's mind as he was meditating alone: 'The Blessed One's disciples dwell applying vigour. I am one of them, yet my mind is not freed from the intoxicating inclinations with no grasping. I have my family's possessions. So it might be possible to enjoy the possessions and do karmically beneficial actions?[92] Suppose that I, having returned to the low life, should enjoy the possessions and should do karmically beneficial actions?'

Then the Blessed One, knowing by his mind the mind of the Venerable Soṇa, just as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm, or might bend back his outstretched arm, vanishing from Mount Vulture Peak appeared in the Cool Grove. ... [He approached Soṇa and asked him if he was thinking of returning to lay life due to the failure of his spiritual efforts. When he said that this was true, the Buddha said:] 'Soṇa, what do you think about this? Were you clever at the lute's

91 That can see how other beings are reborn according to their karma.

92 That lead to a good rebirth, but not liberation.

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stringed music when formerly you were a householder?' 'Yes, venerable sir.' 'Soṇa, what do you think about this? When the strings of your lute were too taut, was your lute at that time tuneful and fit for playing?' 'No indeed not, venerable sir.' 'Soṇa, what do you think about this? When the strings of your lute were too slack, was your lute at that time tuneful and fit for playing?' 'No indeed not, venerable sir.' 'Soṇa, what do you think about this? When the strings of your lute were neither too taut nor too slack, but were keyed to an even pitch, was your lute at that time tuneful and fit for playing?' 'Yes indeed, venerable sir.' 'Soṇa, even so does excessive application of vigour conduce to restlessness, and too feeble vigour conduces to slothfulness. Soṇa, therefore do you determine upon an even balance in vigour and pierce the even balance of the spiritual faculties[93] and reflect upon it.' 'Yes indeed, venerable sir', the Venerable Soṇa answered the Blessed One in assent.

Then the Blessed One, having exhorted the Venerable Soṇa with this exhortation, just like a strong man might extend his bent arm or bend his extended arm, he, vanishing from in front of the Venerable Soṇa in the Cool Grove, appeared on Mount Vulture Peak.

Then the Venerable Soṇa determined upon evenness in vigour and he pierced the evenness of the faculties and reflected upon it. Then the Venerable Soṇa, dwelling alone, secluded, earnest, ardent, self-resolute, having soon realized here and now by his own higher knowledge that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of good families rightly go forth from home life into homeless life, abided in it, and he understood: 'Birth is destroyed, the requirements of the holy life have been fulfilled, what ought to be done has been done, and there is nothing more to be done hereafter.' And so the Venerable Soṇa became one of the arahants.

Mahāvagga V.1.13–18*: Vinaya* I.182–183, trans. G.A.S.

L.33 The Buddha's skilful means as a teacher

In this passage, the Buddha teaches the monk Nanda, his cousin and stepbrother, to ensure he remains as a monk after he had expressed his intention to return to lay life. He asks him why he intends this, then helps him see that if it is a beautiful female he is after, the heavens have plenty of these, more beautiful than any human. Having thus got him to remain a monk, Nanda then comes to see that doing so to attain beautiful goddesses is a low reason, and spurred on by the criticism of other monks, properly applies himself and attains awakening. Thus the Buddha skilfully guides him to the highest goal, by first offering him a tempting lower goal.

Another story of the Buddha's skilfulness as a teacher comes from the Dhammapada *commentary (III.425–28). It describes a goldsmith's son who is particularly bad at doing all the meditation practices he is given, which have been focused mostly on the unlovely aspects of the body, so that he thinks he will never be able to concentrate. In despair, he visits his teacher Sāriputta several times. Sāriputta takes him to the Buddha, who realizes that in many previous lives, as well as this one, he had been a goldsmith, and just needed an object that was beautiful to settle his mind so that he can attain the medita-*

93 See Th.89 and 91.

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tions; a negative object would never, at first, be helpful for him. He conjures up a golden red lotus for the boy, and asks him to practise meditation on that object. The boy quickly attains the four meditative absorptions. The Buddha sees that only now, with his mind calmed, is the time right for the boy to see the signs of decay and decomposition. He causes the lotus to wither. The boy sees this, and then other lotuses, naturally occurring, all at various stages of development, from newly budding to fully mature, to decayed. After a verse (Dhammapada 285) from the Buddha, the boy becomes enlightened.

Another Dhammapada *commentary (II.272-75) story is on the death of Kisā Gotamī's toddler. She is unable to accept this and, carrying the child, goes in search of medicine to 'cure' him. People think her mad, but a kind person directs her to the Buddha. He says he can cure the child if she gets him a pinch of mustard seed – but only if it is from a house where no-one has died. Going in search of this 'medicine', she comes to realise that she is not alone in losing someone to death, and accepts its reality. The Buddha then teaches her and she becomes a stream-enterer.*

'The Sakyan lady, to me, Blessed One, the loveliest in the land, looked on with half-combed hair as I was coming out of the house and said this to me, "May you come back quickly, master." Now it is in recollecting this that I, Blessed One, lead the holy life without finding delight in it, that I am unable to continue the holy life properly, that I will disavow the training and revert to the lower life'

Then the Blessed One seized the Venerable Nanda by the arm and, just as a strong man might stretch out a bent arm, or bend an outstretched arm, just so did he disappear from Jeta's Grove and appear amongst the gods of the Thirty-three. And on that occasion as many as five hundred nymphs, known as 'dove-footed', had come in attendance upon Sakka, lord of gods, as a result of which the Blessed One addressed the Venerable Nanda, saying ... 'What do you think, Nanda? Which is more excessively beautiful, the more fair to behold or the more to inspire serenity: the Sakyan lady who is the loveliest in the land, or these five hundred nymphs who are known as "dove-footed"?' 'It is as if she were a mutilated monkey ... when contrasted with these five hundred nymphs'

'Find delight there, Nanda, find delight there. I will be your surety as regards acquisition of the five hundred nymphs' 'If the Blessed One will be my surety ... then I, Blessed One, will find delight, Blessed One, in the holy life.'

... [After they returned to the Jeta Grove] The monks came to hear that, 'It is said that the Venerable Nanda, brother of the Blessed One and son of his maternal aunt, leads the holy life for the sake of nymphs' Then the monks who were companions of the Venerable Nanda (now) addressed him with the titles 'hireling' and 'buyer' ...

Then the Venerable Nanda, being plagued, humiliated and horrified by his companions' title of 'hireling' and 'buyer', dwelling alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and dedicated, mature, not long afterwards ... entered upon and then abided in that unsurpassed culmination of the holy life for the sake of which young men rightly go forth from home into homelessness ... And the Venerable Nanda became one of the arahants.

Nanda Sutta: Udāna 22–23, trans. P.H.

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L.34 Seek within, and the step-by-step discourse

In this passage, the Buddha has urged a group of men to look within for what is worth finding, rather than be concerned with external matters. He then gives what is known as the step-by-step discourse (see Th.28), in which he prepares his audience's mind before giving them his highest teaching.

Then the Blessed One, having dwelt at Varanasi for as long as he thought fit, set out on tour for Uruvelā. Then the Blessed One left the road and went to a certain woodland grove; having gone there, and having entered it he sat down at the foot of a tree. At that time a group of thirty friends of high standing were sporting in that same grove together with their wives. One of them had no wife; for him they had procured a harlot. Now while they were heedlessly indulging in their sports, that harlot took the articles belonging to them, and ran away.

Then those companions, helping their friend, went in search of that woman; roaming about that woodland grove, they saw the Blessed One sitting at the foot of a tree. Seeing him they went to the place where the Blessed One was; having approached him, they spoke to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, has the Blessed One seen a woman passing by?' 'Young men, what have you to do with the woman?' 'Venerable sir, we the thirty friends of high standing, together with our wives were sporting in this woodland grove. One of us had no wife; for him we had procured a harlot. Now, venerable sir, while we were heedlessly indulging in our sports, that harlot has taken the articles belonging to us, and has run away. Venerable sir, helping our friend, we companions go in search of that woman and roam about this woodland grove.'

'Young men, now what do you think? Which is better for you: that you should go in search of a woman, or that you should go in search of yourselves?' 'Venerable sir, of these, that we should go in search of ourselves is indeed better for us.' 'Young men, if so sit down, I will teach you Dhamma.' The rich young companions replied: 'Yes, venerable sir.' They respectfully greeted the Blessed One, and sat down at a respectful distance.

Then the Blessed One delivered a step-by-step discourse, that is, talk on giving, talk on ethical discipline, talk on the heaven worlds; he made known the danger, the inferior nature and tendency to defilement of sensual pleasures, and the advantage of renouncing them; thus they obtained, while sitting there, the pure and spotless eye of the Dhamma: 'Whatsoever is subject to origination is also subject to cessation.'

And having seen Dhamma, attained Dhamma, known Dhamma, plunged into Dhamma, overcome uncertainty, dispelled all doubts, gained full insight, and having had full confidence in the Dhamma of the teacher independent of anyone else, they said to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, may we receive the admission (into the monastic order) and the full admission in the presence of the Blessed One?' 'Come, monks', said the Blessed One, 'well-taught is the Dhamma; lead a holy life for the sake of complete extinction of the painful. Thus it was the venerable ones' receiving of the full admission.

Mahāvagga: Vinaya I.23–24, trans. G.A.S.

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Teaching is a wonder that is superior to supernormal powers and mind-reading *L.35*

In this passage, the Buddha criticises the suggestion that monks should perform displays of supernormal power so as to increase people's faith in him. Monks might be able to genuinely perform psycho-kinetic wonders and mind-reading, based on the power of their meditation, but this would not impress sceptics to develop faith, as they would see such things as done by some kind of magic charm. The really beneficial 'wonder' is teaching others the way to awakening. While the Buddha expresses disgust at the first two 'wonders', it is clear that his criticism is directed at performing them simply as a display *to attract support. Elsewhere, he uses such powers to better enable him to teach people, and he does not criticise monks who use such powers in this way. Once, the Buddha is said to have performed the 'wonder of the pairs', that only he was capable of: producing fire and water from various parts of his body, and emitting rays of six colours* (Paṭisambhidā-magga *I.125–126). He rebuffs Māra's temptation to turn the Himālayas into gold, though* (Saṃyutta-nikāya *I.116 <258>*).

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Nālandā, in the Pāvārika mango grove. Then the householder Kevaṭṭa[94] came to the Blessed One and, after paying him respect, sat down to one side. So seated, he said to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, this Nālandā is rich, prosperous, populous, and full of people who have faith in the Blessed One. It would be well if the Blessed One were to instruct a monk to perform superhuman wonders of psychic potency. In this way, the people of Nālandā would come to have more faith in the Blessed One.' So being said, the Blessed One spoke to the householder Kevaṭṭa: 'Kevaṭṭa, this is not the way I teach the Dhamma to the monks, saying: Monks, go and perform superhuman wonders of psychic potency for the white-clothed laypeople.

... When the householder Kevaṭṭa repeated his request for a third time, the Blessed One said: 'Kevaṭṭa, there are three kinds of wonder that I have declared, having realized them by my own insight. Which three? They are the wonder of supernormal power, the wonder of mind-reading, and the wonder of instruction. Kevaṭṭa, what is the wonder of supernormal power? Kevaṭṭa, here a monk wields various kinds of supernormal powers: Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears and disappears. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through sky. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were on earth. Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the moon and the sun, so mighty and powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the brahmā worlds.

Then someone who has faith and trust sees that monk wield such varying kinds of supernormal powers. ... That faithful and believing person tells this to someone else who is sceptical and unbelieving. ... And that unfaithful and unbelieving man might say: 'Sir, there is something called the Gandhāra charm. It is by means of this that the monk

94 Spelled Kevaddha in some manuscript traditions, as also with the name of the *sutta*.

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wields such miracles as having been one he becomes many ... He exercises influence with his body even as far as the brahmā worlds.'

Kevaṭṭa, what do you think, would not a sceptic say that to a believer?' 'Venerable sir, he would say thus.' 'Kevaṭṭa, that is why, seeing the danger of the wonder of supernormal power, I am disgusted with, ashamed of and shun it. Kevaṭṭa, what is the wonder of mind-reading? Here a monk reads the minds of other beings, of other people, reads their mental states, their thoughts and ponderings, and says: 'That is how your mind is; that is how it inclines; that is in your heart.' Then someone who has faith and trust sees him doing these things. He tells this to someone else who is sceptical and unbelieving. ... And that unfaithful and unbelieving man might say: 'sir, there is something called the Maṇikā charm. It is by means of this that that monk can read the minds of others ...'

Kevaṭṭa, what do you think, would not a sceptic say that to a believer?' 'Venerable sir, he would say thus.' 'Kevaṭṭa, that is why, seeing the danger the wonder of mind-reading, I am disgusted with, ashamed of and shun it. Kevaṭṭa, what is the wonder of instruction? Kevaṭṭa, here a monk gives instruction as follows: "Think in this way, not that way, attend in this way, not that way, abandon this, and abide having entered on that." Kevaṭṭa, that is called the miracle of instruction.

... [The Buddha goes on to describe guiding a person up to attaining arahantship.] Kevaṭṭa, that is called the wonder of instruction.' And I, Kevaṭṭa, have experienced these three wonders by my own higher knowledge.

Kevaṭṭa Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.211–215, trans. G.A.S.

Praise of the Buddha

L.36 **Praise by the gods**

Venerable sir, Sakka the king of gods, then seeing their satisfaction, said to the gods of the Thirty-three: 'Gentlemen, would you like to hear eight truthful statements in praise of the Blessed One?' 'Yes, sir' On receiving their assent, Sakka the king of gods declared the eight truthful statements in praise of the Blessed One:

'Gods of the Thirty-three, what do you think? As regards the way in which the Blessed One has striven for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare and happiness of gods and humans, we can find no teacher endowed with such qualities, whether we consider the past or the present, other than the Blessed One.

Well-proclaimed by the Blessed One is the Dhamma, directly visible (as to is truth and reality), not delayed (in its results), inviting investigation, applicable and onward leading, to be individually understood by the wise, and we can find no proclaimer of such an onward-leading Dhamma, either in the past or in the present, other than the Blessed One.

Well explained by the Blessed One is what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, what is blameworthy and what is blameless, what is to be followed and what is not to be followed, what is low and what is ex-

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cellent, what is dark, bright and mixed in quality. And we can find none who is a proclaimer of such things, either in the past or in the present other than the Blessed One.

Well explained by the Blessed One to his disciples is the path leading to nirvana, and the two, nirvana and the path, coalesce, just as the waters of the river Ganges and the river Yamuna coalesce and flow on together. And we can find no proclaimer of the path leading to nirvana either in the past or in the present other than the Blessed One.

And the Blessed One has gained companions, both learners who have entered the path and the ones without intoxicating inclinations who have lived the holy life, and the Blessed One dwells together with them, all rejoicing in the one thing. And we can find no such teacher either in the past or in the present other than the Blessed One.

To the Blessed One both gains and fame are well-secured, so much so that, I think, the members of the ruling class will continue to be attached to him, yet the Blessed One takes his food without conceit. And we can find no teacher who does this either in the past or in the present other than the Blessed One.

In accord with what the Blessed One says is what he does, and in accord with what he does is what he says. Acting thus, he practises Dhamma in accord with Dhamma. And we can find no teacher who does this either in the past or in the present other than the Blessed One.

The Blessed One has transcended vacillation, passed beyond all uncertainty, he has accomplished his aim in regard to his goal and the supreme holy life. And we can find no teacher who has done the like, whether we consider the past or the present, other than the Blessed One'.

And when Sakka the king of gods had thus proclaimed these eight truthful statements in praise of the Blessed One, the gods of the Thirty-three were even more pleased, overjoyed and filled with delight and happiness at what they had heard in the Blessed One's praise.

Then certain gods exclaimed: 'Oh, if only four perfectly awakened Buddhas were to arise in the world and teach the Dhamma just like the Blessed One! That would be for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of gods and humans!' And some said: 'Never mind four perfectly awakened Buddhas, three would suffice!' Others said: 'Never mind three, two would suffice!'

This being said, Sakka the king of gods said: 'Gentlemen, it is impossible, it cannot happen, that two perfectly awakened Buddhas should arise simultaneously in a single world-system.[95] That cannot be. May this Blessed One continue to live long, for many years to come, free from sickness and disease! That would be for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of gods and humans!'

Mahā-govinda Sutta: *Dīgha-nikāya* II.222–225, trans. G.A.S.

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95 SeeTh.62 on world-systems.

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The Buddha's appearance and manner

L.37 The Buddha as looking like any other monk

*While it is said that the Buddha could adapt his appearance and speech to those of people he talked to (*Dīgha-nikāya *II.109), in this passage, a disciple of the Buddha who has never seen him at first fails to recognise him when he shares accommodation with him, but then realises who he is when he receives a detailed teaching from him.*

On one occasion the Blessed One was wandering in the Magadhan country and eventually arrived at Rājagaha. There he went to the potter Bhaggava and said to him: 'Bhaggava, if it is not inconvenient for you, I will stay one night in your workshop.' 'Venerable sir, it is not inconvenient for me, but there is a homeless one (a renunciant) already staying there. If he agrees, then stay as long as you like.'

Now there was a clansman named Pukkusāti who had gone forth from the home life into homelessness out of faith in the Blessed One, and on that occasion he was already staying in the potter's workshop. Then the Blessed One went to the Venerable Pukkusāti and said to him: 'Monk, if it is not inconvenient for you, I will stay one night in the workshop.' 'Friend, the potter's workshop is large enough. Let the venerable one stay as long as he likes.'

Then the Blessed One entered the potter's workshop, prepared a spread of grass at one end, and sat down, folding his legs crosswise setting his body erect, and establishing mindfulness in front of him. Then the Blessed One spent most of the night seated in meditation, and the Venerable Pukkusāti also spent most of the night seated in meditation.

Then the Blessed One considered: 'This clansman conducts himself in a way that inspires confidence. Suppose I were to question him?' So the Blessed One asked the Venerable Pukkusāti: 'Monk, under whom have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? Whose Dhamma do you profess?'

'Friend, there is the renunciant Gotama, a Sakyan, who went forth from the Sakyan clan. Now a good report of that Venerable Gotama has arisen: "That Blessed One is the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, endowed with knowledge and conduct, Fortunate One, knower of the worlds, incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, awakened one, Blessed One." I have gone forth under that Blessed One; that Blessed One is my teacher; I profess the Dhamma of that Blessed One.'

'Monk, where is that Blessed One, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, now living?' 'Friend, there is a city in the northern country named Sāvatthī. The Blessed One, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, is now living there.' 'Monk, have you ever seen that Blessed One before? Would you recognize that Blessed One if you see him?' 'No, friend, I have never seen that Blessed One before, nor would I recognize him if I saw him.'

Then the Blessed One considered: This clansman has gone forth from the home life into homelessness under me. Suppose I were to teach

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him Dhamma. So the Blessed One addressed the Venerable Pukkusāti thus: 'Monk, I will teach you Dhamma. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say.' 'Yes, friend', the Venerable Pukkusāti replied. ...

Then the Venerable Pukkusāti, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One's words, rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, he departed in order to search for a bowl and robes. Then, while the Venerable Pukkusāti was searching for a bowl and robes, a stray cow killed him.

Then a number of monks went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, they sat down at one side and told him: 'Venerable sir, the clansman Pukkusāti, who was given a brief instruction by the Blessed One, has died. What is his destination? What is his future course?'

Monks, the clansman Pukkusāti was wise. He practised in accordance with the Dhamma and did not trouble me in the interpretation of the Dhamma. With the destruction of the five lower fetters, the clansman Pukkusāti has reappeared spontaneously in the pure abodes[96] and will attain final nirvana there without ever returning from that world.

Dhātu-vibhaṅga Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.237–247, trans. G.A.S.

The Buddha's bodily characteristics as shaped by his excellent past actions *L.38*

This passage is extracted from one that describes thirty-two bodily characteristics that Gotama was born with, indicative of a future as either a Buddha or a Cakkavatti, *a compassionate 'Wheel-turning' monarch. These characteristics or 'marks' may be regarded as physical in the normal sense, or as aspects of a 'spiritual' body which only sensitive people could see. Either way, some of them came to be used as a basis for visualizing the Buddha, and the qualities he embodied, and then for the form of Buddha-images, when these developed. Each characteristic is said to be the karmic result of a particular excellence in a past life, and to be indicative of a particular quality of the life of a Buddha or* Cakkavatti. *They include such things as the marks of wheels on the soles of his feet, soft hands, a beautiful voice, very blue eyes, a white filament of hair between his eye-brows, and seeming to be crowned by a turban. The past actions that the marks are seen as caused by, done by Gotama when still a* bodhisatta, *are as follows.*

The Tathāgata in previous birth ... when formerly he was born as a human being, was firm in undertaking, steadfast in undertaking wholesome actions: good conduct of body, speech and mind, generosity, ethical discipline, observances on days of special restraint, reverence towards mother, father, renunciants, brahmins, honouring the eldest of the family, and every kind of higher skilful state. ... He acted for the happiness of many people, dispelling agitation, terror, and fear, providing guard and defence and protection in accordance with Dhamma, and gave alms with all the accompaniments. ... Having renounced onslaught on living beings, he refrained from harming living beings; the stick laid down, the sword laid down, he dwelt conscientiously, full of pity, sympathetic to the good of all living beings. ... He was a giver of excellent and delightful hard and soft foods, delicious

96 Heavens in which only non-returners are reborn (see Th.201), where they in time become *arahants*.

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and refreshing drinks. ... He was one who united people through the four means of drawing together harmoniously: giving, endearing speech, helpful conduct, and impartiality. ... He was one who uttered speech to people concerned with both their welfare and the Dhamma, and explained these in detail to them. He performed the sacrificial act of giving Dhamma, bringing happiness and welfare to living beings. ... He taught thoroughly craft or science or conduct or activity, thinking 'May they understand me quickly, discern quickly, quickly succeed, may they not suffer long.' ... He approached renunciants and brahmins, and questioned them thoroughly: 'What is wholesome, venerable sir, what is unwholesome? What is blameworthy, what blameless? What is to be practised, what not practised? What, if done by me, would bring harm and suffering for a long time? Or on the other hand, what if done by me would be beneficial and cause happiness for a long time?' ... He was free from anger, filled with serenity; even when spoken to much, he did not take offence, become angry, show ill-will, or become obdurate, and he manifested neither wrath nor anger or discontent; and he was one who gave fine and soft carpets and coverings of fine linen, of fine cotton, fine silk and fine wool. ... He was one who brought together long-lost and long-separated relatives, associates, friends and companions; he was one who united mother with child and child with mother, likewise father and child, brother and brother, brother and sister, he was one who took pleasure in having made harmony. ... He sought harmony among the populace, knew who each person was similar to, knew it by himself, knew each person, knew each person's special qualities. He was formerly one who did what was required in accordance with people's special qualities: 'This one is worthy of this, this one is worthy of that.' ... He was desirous of the welfare of many people, of their benefit, of their comfort and of their rest from labours, he thought constantly: 'How may they increase in faith, in ethical discipline, learning, generosity, (knowledge of) Dhamma, wisdom, increase in wealth and grain, in land and property, beasts and fowl, sons and wives, servants and workers, relatives, associates, and in connexions by marriage?' ... He was one whose nature was such as not to harm other beings, whether by hands, stones, sticks, or swords. ... He was one who was not shifty, not acting in a crooked way and not looking in a calculated way; he was one who looked at people in a direct way, courteous, with a straightforward mind and with loving eyes. ... He was a leader of the people in wholesome actions: foremost among the people in good conduct of body, speech and mind; in providing alms, undertaking ethical discipline, observances on days of special restraint, honouring mother and father, brahmins and renunciants, and respecting the head of the clan, and in the manifold kinds of higher skilful states. ... He was a speaker of truth, united with truthfulness, reliable, trustworthy, not a deceiver of people. ... He, having abandoned divisive speech, abstained from divisive speech: having heard something from one group of people, he was not one to tell it somewhere else, causing others to be in conflict with them; or having heard something from those others, he was not one to tell it to the first group, causing them to be in conflict with the other people. Thus he was a uniter of those divided, a sustainer of

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those united, fond of harmony, delighting in harmony, rejoicing in harmony, he was one who uttered speech which brought about harmony. ... He had abandoned harsh speech, abstained from harsh speech: he was one who uttered the kind of speech which is gentle, pleasant to hear, affectionate, reaching to the heart, courteous, pleasing and attractive to the many. ... He had abandoned idle chatter, abstained from idle chatter: he spoke at the right time, what is correct and to the point, of Dhamma and ethical discipline; he was one who uttered speech to be treasured, timely, for a reason, measured, meaningful. ... Having abandoned wrong livelihood, he was one who earned his living by right livelihood: he was one who abstained from crooked ways such as cheating with weights, false metal and measure, taking bribes, deceiving and fraud and from such acts of violence as maiming, beating, binding, mugging and looting.

Lakkhaṇa Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya III.142–176, trans. P.H.

The calm and measured movement and behaviour of the Buddha *L.39*

In this passage, someone closely observes the Buddha for seven months, not only noting the thirty-two special characteristics of his body, but how he moves and conducts himself in a calm, measured, relaxed, attentive, ungreedy and caring way.

Then the brahmin student Uttara considered: 'The renunciant Gotama is endowed with the thirty-two characteristics of a great man. Suppose I were to follow the renunciant Gotama and observe his behaviour?' Then the brahmin student Uttara followed the Blessed One for seven months like a shadow, never leaving him. At the end of the seven months in the country of the Videhans, he set out to journey to Mithilā where the brahmin Brahmāyu was. When he arrived, he paid homage to him and sat down at one side.

Thereupon, the brahmin Brahmāyu asked him: 'Well, my dear Uttara, is the report that has been spread about the Venerable Gotama true or not? And is the Venerable Gotama one such as this or not?' 'Sire, the report that has been spread about the Venerable Gotama is true, and not otherwise; and the Venerable Gotama is one such as this and not otherwise. He possesses the thirty-two characteristic of a great man. ...

When he walks, he steps out with the right foot first. He does not extend his foot too far or put it down too near. He walks neither too quickly nor too slowly. He does not walk knocking knee against knee or ankle against ankle. He walks without raising or lowering his thighs, or bringing them together or keeping them apart. When he walks, only the lower part of his body moves, and he does not walk with bodily effort. When he turns to look, he does so with his whole body. He does not look straight up; he does not look straight down. He does not walk looking about. He looks a plough-yoke's length before him, beyond that he has unhindered knowing and seeing.

When he goes indoors, he does not raise or lower his body, or bend it forward or back. He turns round neither too far from the seat nor too near it. He does not lean on the seat with his hand. He does not throw his body onto the seat. When seated indoors, he does not fidget with his hands. He does not fidget with his feet. He does not sit with his

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knees crossed. He does not sit with his ankles crossed.[97] He does not sit with his hand holding his chin. When seated indoors he is not afraid, he does not shiver and tremble, he is not nervous. Being unafraid, not shivering or trembling or nervous, his hair does not stand up and he is intent on seclusion.

When he receives the water for his alms-bowl, he does not raise or lower the bowl or tip it forwards or backwards. He receives neither too little nor too much water for the bowl. He washes the bowl without making a splashing noise. He washes the bowl without turning it round. Not until he has put the bowl down on the ground does he wash his hands; by the time his hands are washed, the bowl is washed; by the time the bowl is washed, the hands are washed. He pours the water for the bowl neither too far nor too near, and he does not scatter it.

When he receives rice, he does not raise or lower the bowl or tip it forwards or backwards. He receives neither too little rice nor too much rice. He adds sauces in the right proportion; he does not exceed the right amount of sauce in the mouthful. He turns the mouthful over two or three times in his mouth and then swallows it, and no rice kernel enters his body unchewed, and no rice kernel remains in his mouth; then he takes another mouthful. He takes his food experiencing the taste, though not experiencing greed for the taste. The food he takes has eight factors: it is neither for amusement, nor for intoxication, nor for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness, but only for the endurance and continuance of his body, for the ending of discomfort, and for assisting the holy life; he considers: 'Thus I shall terminate old feelings (hunger) without arousing new feelings (from over-eating) and I shall be healthy and blameless and shall live in comfort.'

When he has eaten and receives water for the bowl, he does not raise or lower the bowl or tip it forwards or backwards. He receives neither too little nor too much water for the bowl. He washes the bowl without making a splashing noise. He washes the bowl without turning it round ... [as above]. When he has eaten, he puts the bowl on the floor neither too far nor too near; and he is neither careless of the bowl nor over-solicitous about it.

When he has eaten, he sits in silence for a while, but he does not let the time for the blessing go by. When he has eaten and gives the blessing, he does not do so criticizing the meal or expecting another meal; he instructs, urges, rouses, and gladdens that audience with talk purely on the Dhamma. When he has done so, he rises from his seat and departs. He walks neither too fast nor too slow, and he does not go as one who wants to get away.

His robe is worn neither too high nor too low on his body, not too tight against his body, nor too loose on his body, nor does the wind blow his robe away from his body. Dust and dirt do not soil his body.

When he has gone to the monastery, he sits down on a seat made ready. Having sat down, he washes his feet, though he does not concern himself with grooming his feet. Having washed his feet, he seats him-

97 Awareness shows that sitting with knees or ankles crossed can express and store tension.

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self cross-legged, sets his body erect, and establishes mindfulness in front of him. He does not occupy his mind with self-affliction, or the affliction of others, or the affliction of both; he sits with his mind set on his own welfare, on the welfare of others, and on the welfare of both, even on the welfare of the whole world.

When he has gone to the monastery, he teaches the Dhamma to an audience. He neither flatters nor berates that audience; he instructs, urges, rouses, and encourages it with talk purely on the Dhamma. The speech that issues from his mouth has eight qualities; it is distinct, intelligible, melodious, audible, fluent, clear, deep, and sonorous. But while his voice is intelligible as far as the audience extends, his speech does not issue out beyond the audience. When the people have been instructed, urged, roused, and gladdened by him, they rise from their seats and depart looking only at him and concerned with nothing else.

Sire, we have seen the Venerable Gotama walking, we have seen him standing, we have seen him entering indoors, we have seen him indoors seated in silence, we have seen him eating indoors, we have seen him seated in silence after eating, we have seen him giving the blessing after eating, we have seen him going to the monastery, we have seen him in the monastery seated in silence, we have seen him in the monastery teaching the Dhamma to an audience. Such is the Venerable Gotama; such he is, and more than that.

When this was said, the brahmin Brahmāyu rose from his seat, and after arranging his upper robe on one shoulder, he extended his hands in reverential salutation towards the Blessed One and uttered this exclamation three times: 'Homage to the Blessed One, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha! Homage to the Blessed One, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha! Homage to the Blessed One, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha!', and then, 'Perhaps sometime or other we might meet the Venerable Gotama, perhaps we might have some conversation with him.'

Brahmāyu Sutta: *Majjhima-nikāya* II.136–141, trans. G.A.S.

Taming and teaching those who resisted or threatened him

Showing an angry man the error of his ways *L.40*

Here the Buddha tames a bad tempered man, such that he goes on to ordain, and later attains awakening.

Akkosaka (Abusive), a brahmin of the Bhāradvāja clan, heard: 'It is said that a brahmin of the Bhāradvāja clan has gone forth from the household life into homelessness under the renunciant Gotama.' Angry and displeased, he approached the Blessed One and abused and reviled him with rude, harsh words.

When he had finished speaking, the Blessed One said to him: 'Brahmin, what do you think? Do your friends and colleagues, kinsmen and relatives, as well as guests come to visit you?' 'Venerable Gotama, sometimes they come to visit me.' 'Do you then offer them some food or a meal or a snack?' 'Venerable Gotama, sometimes I do.' 'But if they

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do not accept it from you, then to whom does the food belong?' 'If they do not accept it from me, then the food still belongs to us.'

'Brahmin, so too, we who do not abuse anyone, who do not scold anyone, who do not rail against anyone, refuse to accept from you the abuse and scolding and tirade you let loose at us. Brahmin, it still belongs to you! Brahmin, it still belongs to you!

Brahmin, one who abuses his own abuser, who scolds the one who scolds him, who rails against the one who rails at him, he is said to partake of the meal, to enter upon an exchange. But we do not partake of the meal; we do not enter upon an exchange. Brahmin, it still belongs to you! Brahmin, it still belongs to you!'

(Akkosaka:) 'The king and his retinue understand the renunciant Gotama to be an arahant, yet the Venerable Gotama still gets angry.'

(The Buddha:)

'How can anger arise in one who is angerless, in the tamed living calmly, in one liberated by perfect knowledge, in the stable one who abides in peace?

One who repays an angry man with anger thereby makes things worse for himself. Not repaying an angry man with anger, one wins a battle hard to win.

One practices for the welfare of both, one's own and the other's, when, knowing that one's foe is angry, one mindfully maintains his peace.

When one achieves the cure of both oneself and the other, people who think one a fool are unskilled in Dhamma.'

When this was said, the brahmin Akkosaka of the Bhāradvāja clan said to the Blessed One; 'Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways by Master Gotama, as though he were turning the right way up what had been turned upside down, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see visible forms. I go for refuge to the Master Gotama, and to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of monks. May I receive the going forth under Master Gotama, may I receive higher ordination?

Akkosa Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.161–163 <347–349>, trans. G.A.S.

L.41 Taming a layperson who arrogantly thought he already had the non-attachment of a renunciant

Then when it was morning, the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went to Āpana for the alms-round. When he had wandered for alms in Āpana and had returned from his alms-round, after his meal he went to a certain grove for the day's (meditative) abiding. Having entered the grove, he sat down at one root of a tree.

Potaliya the householder, while walking and wandering for exercise, wearing full dress with parasol and sandals, also went to the grove, and having entered the grove, he went to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he stood at one side.

The Blessed One said to him: 'Householder, there are seats, sit down if you like.' When this was said, the householder Potaliya considered, 'The renunciant Gotama addresses me as "householder"', and angry

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and displeased, he remained silent. A second time the Blessed One said to him, 'Householder, there are seats, sit down if you like.' And a second time the householder Potaliya considered: 'The renunciant Gotama addresses me as "householder"', and angry and displeased, he remained silent. A third time the Blessed One said to him, 'Householder, there are seats, sit down if you like.'

When this was said, the householder Potaliya considered: 'The renunciant Gotama addresses me as "householder"', and angry and displeased, he said to the Blessed One, 'Venerable Gotama, it is neither fitting nor proper that you address me as householder.' 'Householder, you have the aspects, marks, and signs of a householder.' 'Venerable Gotama, nevertheless I have given up all my works and cut off all my affairs.' 'Householder, in what way have you given up all your works and cut off all your affairs?' 'Venerable Gotama, I have given all my wealth, grain, silver, and gold to my children as their inheritance. Without advising or admonishing them, I live merely on food and clothing. That is how I have given up all my works and cut off all my affairs.'

'Householder, the cutting off of affairs as you describe it is one thing, but in the noble one's discipline the cutting off of affairs is different. ... Householder, there are these eight things in the noble one's discipline that lead to the cutting off of affairs. What are the eight? With the support of the non-killing of living beings, the killing of living beings is to be abandoned. With the support of taking only what is given, the taking of what is not given is to be abandoned. With the support of truthful speech, false speech is to be abandoned. With the support of undivisive speech, divisive speech is to be abandoned. With the support of refraining from rapacious greed, rapacious greed is to be abandoned. With the support of refraining from spiteful scolding, spiteful scolding is to be abandoned. With the support of refraining from angry despair, angry despair is to be abandoned. With the support of non-arrogance, arrogance is to be abandoned. These are the eight things, stated in brief without being expounded in detail, that lead to the cutting off of affairs in the noble one's discipline.'

... [The Buddha goes on to explain that each of the above faults is to be abandoned by realizing that if one did not abandon it, one would blame oneself, the wise would censure one, one would have a bad rebirth, and one would see that not abandoning it was a 'fetter and a hindrance'. He also gives many similes to illustrate the dangers of sensual pleasures, and the benefit of transcending them.]

'Venerable sir, the Blessed One has inspired in me love for renunciants, confidence in renunciants, and reverence for renunciants.'

Potaliya Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.359–368, trans. G.A.S.

Taming the conceited Mānatthaddha *L.42*

Now on that occasion a brahmin named Mānatthaddha[98] was residing at Sāvatthī. He did not pay respect to his mother or father, nor to his teacher or eldest brother. Now on that occasion the Blessed One was

98 Mānatthaddha, 'stiff with conceit', could be his nick name

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teaching Dhamma surrounded by a large assembly. Then the brahmin Mānatthaddha considered, 'The renunciant Gotama is teaching Dhamma surrounded by a large assembly. Let me approach him. If the renunciant Gotama addresses me, then I will address him in turn. But if he does not address me, neither will I address him.'

Then the brahmin Mānatthaddha approached the Blessed One and stood silently to one side, but the Blessed One did not address him. Then the brahmin Mānatthaddha, thinking, 'This renunciant Gotama does not know anything', wanted to turn back, but the Blessed One, having known with his own mind the reflection in the brahmin's mind, addressed the brahmin Mānatthaddha in verse:

Brahmin, the fostering of conceit is never good for one keen on his own welfare.

You should instead foster that purpose for which you have come here.

Then the brahmin Mānatthaddha, thinking, 'The renunciant Gotama knows my mind', prostrated himself right there with his head at the Blessed One's feet. He kissed the Blessed One's feet, stroked them with his hands, and announced his name thus, Venerable Gotama, I am Mānatthaddha! Venerable Gotama, I am Mānatthaddha!'

Then that assembly was struck with amazement and the people said, 'Sir, it is wonderful indeed! Sir, it is amazing indeed! This brahmin Mānatthaddha does not pay respect to his mother and father, nor to his teacher or eldest brother, yet he shows such supreme honour towards the renunciant Gotama.'

Then the Blessed One said to the brahmin Mānatthaddha, 'Brahmin, enough! Get up and sit in your own seat, as your mind has confidence in me.'

Mānatthadddha Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.177–178 <381–383>, trans. G.A.S.

L.43 Teaching those sent to kill him

The Buddha's cousin Devadatta was an evil monk who was jealous of the Buddha's influence. He thus asked his friend prince Ajatasattu to have the Buddha assassinated so that he could become leader of the Sangha. A man was sent to kill the Buddha, and men sent to kill the returning assassin, and others to kill them, to ensure secrecy.

Then that man who was alone, having grasped a sword and shield, having bound on a bow and quiver, approached the Blessed One; having approached, when he was quite near the Blessed One he stood still, his body quite rigid, afraid, anxious, fearful, alarmed. The Blessed One saw that man standing still, his body quite rigid, afraid, anxious, fearful, alarmed, and seeing him spoke thus to him: 'Come, friend, do not be afraid.' Then the man, having put his sword and shield and bow and quiver to one side, approached the Blessed One, and having approached, inclined his head to the Blessed One's feet, and said to him, 'Venerable sir, a transgression has overcome me, foolish, misguided, unskilful that I was, in that I was coming here with a malignant mind, my mind set on murder. Venerable one, may the Blessed One acknowledge for me the transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future.'

'Truly, friend, a transgression overcame you ... But if you, friend,

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having seen a transgression as a transgression, and confess it according to what is right, we acknowledge it for you; for, friend, in the discipline of the noble one, this is growth: whoever, having seen a transgression as a transgression, acknowledges it according to what is right, he attains restraint in the future.' ... [The Buddha then taught him and he attained stream-entry and became a lay disciple. The Buddha then warned him to avoid the other assassins, though when they arrived, each was taught by the Buddha and also attained stream-entry.]

Cullavagga VII.3.6–8: *Vinaya* II.191–192, trans. P.H.

Taming a fierce elephant sent to kill him *L.44*

After the above failed attempt on his life, Devadatta himself tried to kill the Buddha by rolling down a large stone at him; but it missed and only a shard of it cut the Buddha's foot. Devadatta then tried a third time to kill the Buddha, by having a fierce, man-killing elephant, Nāḷāgiri , let loose on the road along which the Buddha was coming.

The elephant Nāḷāgiri saw the Blessed One coming from afar; seeing him, having lifted up his trunk, he rushed towards the Blessed One, his ears and tail erect. Monks with the Buddha saw this and said to the Blessed One, 'Venerable sir, this elephant Nāḷāgiri , coming along this carriage-road, is a fierce man-slayer. Venerable sir, let the Blessed One turn back, let the Fortunate One turn back.' 'Wait, monks, do not be afraid, it is impossible, monks, it cannot come to pass that anyone could deprive the Tathāgata of life by aggression; monks, Tathāgatas attain final nirvana not because of an attack.' ... [The monks repeated their request twice more, and the Buddha replied in the same way each time.]

Now at that time people, having mounted up on to the (safety of) the long houses and the curved houses and the roofs, waited there ... Then the Blessed One suffused the elephant Nāḷāgiri with a mind of loving kindness. Then the elephant Nāḷāgiri , having been suffused by the Blessed One with a mind of loving kindness, having lowered his trunk, approached the Blessed One, and having approached, stood in front of him. Then the Blessed One, stroking the elephant Nāḷāgiri 's forehead with his right hand, addressed him with verses ...

Then the elephant Nāḷāgiri , having taken the dust of the Blessed One's feet with his trunk, having scattered it over his head, moved back bowing while he gazed upon the Blessed One. Then the elephant Nāḷāgiri , having returned to the elephant stable, stood in his own place, and it was in that way that he became tamed.

Cullavagga VII.3.11–12: *Vinaya* II.194–195, trans. P.H.

Taming the murderous bandit Aṅgulimāla (Finger-garland) *L.45*

This passage describes how the Buddha tamed this murderous bandit who had terrified everyone else, so that he then ordained as a monk, and a king seeking to overcome him came to respect him as a monk. Beyond the section below, Aṅgulimāla goes on to help a woman with a difficult childbirth by the power of his truth-utterance that he had never killed anyone since his birth – i.e. since his birth as a noble person. He goes on to attain awakening, though later he be-

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comes bloodied from people throwing things at him when they recognise him. The Buddha urges him to patiently endure this as the karmic results of his past actions, which would have led to thousands of years in a hellish rebirth if he had not radically changed his ways. The passage contains a message about the reformability of criminals.

Now on that occasion there was a bandit in the territory of King Pasenadi of Kosala named Aṅgulimāla, who was murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Villages, towns, and districts were laid waste by him. He was constantly murdering people and he wore their fingers as a garland.

Then, when it was morning, the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and robe, went into Sāvatthī for alms. When he had wandered for alms in Sāvatthī and had returned from his alms-round, after his meal he set his resting place in order, and taking his bowl and robe, set out on the road leading towards Aṅgulimāla.

Cowherds, shepherds, ploughmen, and travellers saw the Blessed One walking along the road leading towards Aṅgulimāla and told him: 'Renunciant, do not take this road. On this road is the bandit Aṅgulimāla, who is murderous, bloody-handed ... he wears their fingers as a garland. Men have come along this road in groups of ten, twenty, thirty, and even forty, but still they have fallen into Aṅgulimāla's hands.' When this was said the Blessed One went on in silence. For the second time ... for the third time the cowherds, shepherds, ploughmen, and travellers ... told this to the Blessed One ... [as before]. When this was said for a third time, still the Blessed One went on in silence.

The bandit Aṅgulimāla saw the Blessed One coming in the distance. When he saw him, he considered: 'It is wonderful, it is marvellous! Men have come along this road in groups of ten, twenty, thirty, and even forty, but still they have fallen into my hands. But now this renunciant comes alone, unaccompanied, as if driven by fate. Why shouldn't I take this renunciant's life?'

Aṅgulimāla then took up his sword and shield, buckled on his bow and quiver, and followed close behind the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One performed such a feat of supernormal power that the bandit Aṅgulimāla, though walking as fast as he could, could not catch up with the Blessed One, who was walking at his normal pace.

Then the bandit Aṅgulimāla considered: 'It is wonderful, it is marvellous! Formerly I could catch up even with a swift elephant and seize it; I could catch up even with a swift horse and seize it; I could catch up even with a swift chariot and seize it; I could catch up even with a swift deer and seize it; but now, though I am walking as fast as I can, I cannot catch up with this renunciant, who is walking at his normal pace!'

Then the bandit Aṅgulimāla stopped and called out to the Blessed One, 'Stop, renunciant! Stop renunciant!' (The Blessed One replied:) 'Aṅgulimāla, I have stopped, you stop too.' Then the bandit Aṅgulimāla considered, 'These renunciants, the Sakyans, speak truth, assert truth; but though this renunciant is still walking, he says: "Aṅgulimāla, I have stopped, you stop too." Suppose I question this renunciant.' Then the bandit Aṅgulimāla addressed the Blessed One in verses thus:

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'Renunciant, while you are walking, you tell me you have stopped; but now, when I have stopped, you say I have not stopped. Renunciant, I ask you now about the meaning: How is it that you have stopped and I have not?'

'Aṅgulimāla, I have stopped forever, I abstain from violence towards living beings; but you have no restraint towards things that live: That is why I have stopped and you have not.'

'Oh, at long last this renunciant, a venerated sage, has come to this great forest for my sake. Having heard your stanza teaching me Dhamma, I will indeed renounce evil forever.'

So saying, the bandit took his sword and weapons and flung them in a gaping chasm's pit; the bandit worshipped the Fortunate One's feet, and then and there asked for the going forth.[99]

The awakened one, the sage of great compassion, the teacher of the world with all its gods, addressed him with these words: 'Come, monk.' And that was how he came to be a monk.

Then the Blessed One set out to wander back to Sāvatthī with Aṅgulimāla as his attendant. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Sāvatthī, and there he lived at Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

Now at that occasion great crowds of people were gathering at the gates of King Pasenadi's inner palace, very loud and noisy, crying: 'Sire, the bandit Aṅgulimāla is in your territory; he is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings! Villages, towns, and districts have been laid waste by him! He is constantly murdering people and he wears their fingers as a garland! The king must put him down!'

Then in the middle of the day King Pasenadi of Kosala drove out of Sāvatthī with a cavalry of five hundred men and set out for the park. He drove thus as far as the road was passable for carriages, and then he dismounted from his carriage and went forward on foot to the Blessed One. After paying homage to the Blessed One, he sat down at one side, and the Blessed One said to him, 'Great King, what is it? Is the king Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha attacking you, or the Licchavis of Vesāli, or other hostile kings?' 'Venerable sir, the king Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha is not attacking me, nor are the Licchavis of Vesāli, nor are other hostile kings. But there is a bandit in my territory named Aṅgulimāla, who is murderous, bloody-handed Venerable sir, I shall never be able to put him down.'

'Great king, suppose you were to see that Aṅgulimāla has shaved off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and gone forth from the home life into homelessness; that he was abstaining from killing living beings, from taking what is not given and from false speech; that he was eating only one meal a day, and was celibate, virtuous, of good character. If you were to see him thus, how would you treat him?'

'Venerable sir, we would pay respect to him, or rise up for him, or invite him to be seated; or we would invite him to accept robes, alms-

99 Ordination.

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food, a resting place, or medicinal requisites; or we would arrange for him lawful guarding, defence, and protection. But, venerable sir, how could such an immoral man, one of evil character, ever have such ethical discipline and restraint?'

Now on that occasion the Venerable Aṅgulimāla was sitting not far from the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One extended his right arm and said to King Pasenadi of Kosala, 'Great king, this is Aṅgulimāla.' Then King Pasenadi was frightened, alarmed, and terrified. Knowing this, the Blessed One told him, 'Great king, do not be afraid, do not be afraid. There is nothing for you to fear from him.' Then the king's fear, alarm, and terror subsided. He went over to the Venerable Aṅgulimāla and said, 'Master, are you, venerable sir, really Aṅgulimāla?' 'Yes, great king.' 'Venerable sir, of what family is the master's father? Of what family is his mother?' 'Great king, my father is a Gagga; my mother is Mantāṇī.' 'Let the noble Gagga, son of Mantāṇī rest content. I shall provide robes, alms-food, resting place, and medicinal requisites for the noble Gagga son of Mantāṇi.'

Now at that time the Venerable Aṅgulimāla was a forest dweller, an alms-food eater, a refuse-rag wearer, and restricted himself to three robes. He replied: 'Great king, enough, my triple robe is complete.' King Pasenadi then returned to the Blessed One, and after paying respect to him, he sat down at one side and said: 'Venerable sir, it is wonderful, it is marvellous how the Blessed One tames the untamed, brings peace to the unpeaceful, and leads to nirvana those who have not attained nirvana. Venerable sir, we ourselves could not tame him with force or weapons. Venerable sir, and now we depart. We are busy and have much to do.'

Aṅgulimāla Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya II.98–102, trans. G.A.S.

The Buddha's meditative life and praise for quietness and contentment

L.46 **Meditating alone**

In this passage, a brahmin has been told by some of his young students that while wood-gathering they have seen a renunciant (the Buddha) meditating in a nearby woodland thicket. He therefore goes there and addresses the Buddha in verse.

'Having entered the empty, desolate forest, deep in the woods, where many terrors lurk, with a motionless body, steady, lovely, how do you meditate, O monk, so beautifully!

In the forest where no song or music sounds, a solitary sage has resorted to the woods! This strikes me as a wonder that you dwell with joyful mind alone in the woods.

I suppose you desire the supreme triple heaven, the company of the world's divine lord; therefore you resort to the desolate forest: You practise penance here for attaining Brahmā.'

(The Buddha:) 'Whatever be the many wishes and delights that are always attached to the manifold elements, the longings sprung from the root that is unknowing: All I have demolished along with their root.

I have no wishes, I'm unattached, disengaged; my vision of all things

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has been purified. O brahmin, having attained the auspicious, supreme awakening, self-confident, I meditate alone.'

Kaṭṭhahāra Sutta: *Saṃyutta-nikāya* I.180–181 <389–390>, trans. G.A.S.

Quietly attentive disciples *L.47*

In this passage, a non-Buddhist wanderer, who has noisy and over-talkative disciples, receives the Buddha and repeats to him that he has heard that, while other teachers lose disciples who are critical of them, the Buddha's disciples are quietly attentive, and even if they return to lay life, they remain respectful of the Buddha for practising and praising such qualities as contentment.

Then the Blessed One went to the Peacocks' Sanctuary, Wanderers' Park. Now on that occasion the wanderer Sakuludāyin was seated with a large assembly of wanderers who were making an uproar, loudly and noisily talking many kinds of pointless talk, such as talks of kings, robbers, ministers, armies, dangers, battles, food, drink, clothing, beds, garlands, perfumes, relatives, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countries, women, heroes, streets, wells, the dead, trifles, the origin of the world, the origin of the sea, whether the things are so or are not so.

Then the wanderer Sakuludāyin saw the Blessed One coming in the distance. Seeing him coming afar, he requested his own assembly to be quiet thus: 'Sirs, be quiet; sirs, make no noise. Here comes the renunciant Gotama. This venerable one likes quiet and commends quiet. Perhaps if he finds our assembly a quiet one, he will think to join us.' Then the wanderers became silent.

The Blessed One went to the wanderer Sakuludāyin, who said to him: 'Let the venerable one come! Welcome to the venerable one! It is long since the venerable one found an opportunity to come here. Let the venerable one be seated; this seat is ready.' The Blessed One sat down on the seat made ready, and the wanderer Sakuludāyin took a low seat and sat down at one side. When he had done so, the Blessed One asked him: 'Udāyin, for what discussion are you sitting together here now? And what was your discussion that was interrupted?'

'Venerable sir, let be the discussion for which we are now sitting together here. The Blessed One can well hear about it later. Venerable sir, in recent days when renunciants and brahmins of various sects have been gathering together and sitting together in the debating hall, this topic has arisen: "It is a gain for the people of Aṅga and Magadha that these renunciants and brahmins, heads of orders, heads of groups, teachers of groups, well-known and famous founders of sects regarded by many as saints, have to spend the rainy season at Rājagaha ... [Various sect leaders are mentioned by name, and then it is said that many of their disciples had left them after criticising them.]

And some said this: "This renunciant Gotama is the head of an order, the head of a group, the teacher of a group, the well-known and famous founder of a sect regarded by many as a saint. He is honoured, respected, revered, and venerated by his disciples, and his disciples live in dependence on him, honouring and respecting him. Once the renunciant Gotama was teaching his Dhamma to an assembly of several hundred followers and there a certain disciple of his cleared his throat.

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Thereupon one of his companions in the holy life nudged him with his knee to indicate: 'Venerable one, be quiet, make no noise; the Blessed One the teacher is teaching us the Dhamma.'

When the renunciant Gotama is teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of several hundred followers, on that occasion there is no sound of his disciples' coughing or clearing their throats. For then that large assembly is poised in expectancy: 'Let us here the Dhamma the Blessed One is about to teach.' Just as though a man were at a crossroads pressing out pure honey and a large group of people were poised in expectancy, so too, when the renunciant Gotama is teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of several hundred followers, on that occasion there is no sound of his disciples' coughing or clearing their throats. For then that large assembly is poised in expectancy: 'Let us hear the Dhamma the Blessed One is about to teach.'

And even those disciples of his who fall out with their companions in the holy life and abandon the training to return to the low life, even they praise the Blessed One and the Dhamma and the community; they blame themselves instead of others, saying: 'We were unlucky, we have little beneficial karma; for though we went forth into homelessness in such a well-proclaimed Dhamma, we were unable to live the perfect and pure holy life for the rest of our lives.' Having become monastery attendants or lay followers, they undertake and observe the five precepts.[100] Thus the renunciant Gotama is honoured, respected, revered, and venerated by his disciples, and his disciples live in dependence on him, honouring and respecting him.'

'Udāyin, how many qualities do you see in me because of which my disciples honour, respect, revere, and venerate me, and live in dependence on me, honouring and respecting me?'

'Venerable sir, I see five qualities in the Blessed One because of which his disciples honour, respect, revere, and venerate him, and live in dependence on him, honouring and respecting him. What are the five? Venerable sir, the Blessed One eats little and commends eating little; this I see as the first quality of the Blessed One because of which his disciples honour, respect, revere, and venerate him, and live in dependence on him, honouring and respecting him. Venerable sir, the Blessed One is content with any kind of robe and commends contentment with any kind of robe ... the Blessed One is content with any kind of alms-food and commends contentment with any kind of alms-food ... the Blessed One is content with any kind of resting place and commends contentment with any kind of resting place ... the Blessed One is secluded and commends seclusion ... Venerable sir, these are the five qualities I see in the Blessed One because of which his disciples honour, respect, revere, and venerate him, and live in dependence on him, honouring and respecting him.

Mahā-sakuludāyi Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya II.1–7, trans. G.A.S.

100 Of lay ethics: see Th.110.

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Attracting help from an elephant who also sought solitude *L.48*

This passage comes at a time when the Buddha had gone off into the forest for some solitude, after having experienced some quarrelling and disputing monks at Kosambī. He receives help from a bull-elephant also seeking solitude.

Walking on tour in due course the Blessed One arrived at Pārileyya, and stayed there in the Guarded Woodland Thicket at the root of a lovely sāl-tree. Then when the Blessed One was meditating in private, a reasoning arose in his mind thus: 'Formerly, beset by those monks of Kosambī, makers of strife, makers of quarrels ... I did not live in comfort; but now that I am alone with no other, I am living in comfort removed from those monks'

Now a certain large bull-elephant was beset by elephants and cow-elephants, by elephant calves and sucklings; he ate grass already cropped by them, and they ate bundles of branches as he broke them off; and he drank muddied water and when he crossed over at a ford, the cow-elephants went pushing against his body. Then it occurred to that large bull-elephant: 'Now I am living beset by elephants and cow elephants ... Suppose I were to live alone, secluded from the crowd?'

Then the large bull-elephant, leaving the herd, approached Pārileyya, the Guarded Woodland Thicket, the lovely sāl-tree and the Blessed One; having approached, by means of his trunk he set out drinking water for the Blessed One and water for washing, and he kept the grass down. Then it occurred to the large bull-elephant: 'Now formerly, I was beset by elephants and cow elephants...; but now that I am alone with no other, I am living in comfort....'

Mahāvagga X.4.6–7: *Vinaya* I.352 –353, trans. P.H.

Physical ailments of the Buddha, and compassionate help for the sick

Tired and stretching an aching back *L.49*

The suttas *contain some very 'human' information on the Buddha.*

Then the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and robe, went with the community of monks to the assembly hall. When he arrived, he washed his feet and then entered the hall and sat down by the central pillar facing the east. And the monks washed their feet and entered the hall and sat down by the western wall facing the east, with the Blessed One before them. And the Sakyans of Kapilavatthu washed their feet and entered the hall and sat down by the eastern wall facing the west, with the Blessed One before them.

Then when the Blessed One had instructed, urged, roused, and gladdened the Sakyans of Kapilavatthu with talk on Dhamma for much of the night, he said to the Venerable Ānanda: 'Ānanda, speak to the Sakyans of Kapilavatthu about the disciple in higher training who has entered upon the way. My back is uncomfortable. I will rest it.' 'Yes, venerable sir, Venerable Ānanda replied.'

Then the Blessed One prepared his patchwork cloak folded in four

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and lay down on his right side in the lion's pose, with one foot overlapping the other, mindful and clearly comprehending, after noting in his mind the time for rising (after sleeping).

Sekha Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.354,[101] trans. G.A.S.

L.50 Request for hot water

Now on that occasion the Blessed One was afflicted by winds and the Venerable Upavāna was his attendant. Then the Blessed One addressed Venerable Upavāna thus, 'Come, Upavāna, find some hot water for me.' 'Yes, venerable sir, Venerable Upavāna replied.'

Then Venerable Upavāna dressed and, taking bowl and robe, went to the residence of Devahita, a brahmin, where he stood silently to one side. The brahmin Devahita saw Venerable Upavāna standing silently to one side and addressed him in verse:

'Silent, the arahant stands, shaven-headed, clad in a stitched robe, what do you want, what do you seek, what have you come here to beg?'

'The arahant, the master in the world, the sage, is afflicted with winds. Brahmin, if there is any hot water, please give it for the sage.

He is worshipped by those worthy of worship, honoured by those worthy of honour, respected by those worthy of respect: It is to him that I wish to take it.'

Then the brahmin Devahita ordered a man to bring a carrying pole with hot water and presented a bag of molasses to Venerable Upavāna. Then Venerable Upavāna approached the Blessed One. He had the Blessed One bathed with the hot water, and he mixed the molasses with hot water and offered it to him. Then the Blessed One's ailment subsided.

Devahita Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.174–175 <375–377>, trans. G.A.S.

L.51 Enduring pain from an injury, and sleeping it off

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha in the Maddakucchi Deer Park. Now on that occasion the Blessed One's foot had been cut by a stone splinter. Severe pains assailed the Blessed One, bodily feelings that were painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, and disagreeable. But the Blessed One endured them, mindful and clearly comprehending, without becoming distressed.

Then the Blessed One had his robe folded in four, and he lay down on his right side in the lion's posture with one leg overlapping the other, mindful and clearly comprehending.

Then Māra the evil one approached the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:

'Do you lie down in a daze or drunk on poetry? Don't you have sufficient goals to meet? Being alone in a secluded lodging, why do you sleep with a drowsy face?'

'I do not lie in a daze or drunk on poetry; having reached the goal, I am rid of sorrow. Being alone in a secluded lodging, I lie down full of compassion for all beings.

Even those with a dart struck in the breast piercing their heart mo-

101 Cf. Dīgha-nikāya III.209

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ment by moment, even these here, stricken, get to sleep; so why should I not get to sleep when my dart has been drawn out?

I do not lie awake in dread, nor am I afraid to sleep. The nights and days do not afflict me; I see for myself no decline in the world. Therefore I can sleep in peace, full of compassion for all beings.'

Then Māra the evil one ... disappeared right there.

Sakalika Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.110–111 <245–246>, trans. G.A.S.

Recovering from an illness by having the seven factors of awakening recited *L.52*

In this passage, the Buddha recovers from an illness by having seven factors conducive to awakening (bojjhaṅga) *recited; in the two previous discourses, he himself recited these to the monks Mahā-kassapa and Mahā-moggallāna to help them recover from their illnesses.*

On one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel Sanctuary. Now on that occasion the Blessed One was sick, afflicted, gravely ill. Then Venerable Mahā-cunda approached the Blessed One, paid respect to him, and sat down to one side. The Blessed One then said to Venerable Mahā-cunda, 'Recite the factors of awakening, Cunda.'

'These seven factors of awakening, venerable sir, have been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, they lead to higher knowledge, to awakening, to nirvana. What seven? The awakening factor of mindfulness ... of investigation of Dhamma ... of vigour... of joy ... of tranquillity, of meditative concentration ... of equanimity ...'

'Surely, Cunda, they are factors of awakening! Surely, Cunda, they are factors of awakening!'

'This is what Venerable Mahā-cunda said. The teacher approved. And the Blessed One recovered from that illness. In such a way the Blessed One was cured of his illness.

Gilāna Sutta no.3: *Saṃyutta-nikāya* V.81, trans. P.H.

Compassionate help for a sick monk *L.53*

This passage shows the practical compassion of the Buddha, caring for a sick monk and urging monks to look after sick co-monks as they would do for a family member.

Now at that time a certain monk was sick with dysentery. He lay fouled in his own urine and excrement. Then the Blessed One, on an inspection tour of the lodgings with Venerable Ānanda as his attendant, went to the dwelling of that monk and, on arrival, saw the monk lying fouled in his own urine and excrement.

On seeing him, the Blessed One went to the monk and said, 'Monk, what is your sickness?' 'Venerable sir, I have dysentery.' 'Monk, do you have an attendant?' 'No, venerable sir, I do not have one.' 'Monk, why don't the monks attend to you?' 'Venerable sir, I do not do anything for the monks, which is why they do not attend to me.'

Then the Blessed One addressed Venerable Ānanda, 'Ānanda, go and bring some water. We will wash this monk.' 'Yes, venerable sir', Venerable Ānanda replied, and fetched some water. The Blessed One sprinkled water on the monk, and Venerable Ānanda washed him off. Then,

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with the Blessed One taking the monk by the head, and Venerable Ānanda taking him by the feet, they lifted him up and placed him on a bed.

Then the Blessed One, from this cause, because of this event, had the monks assembled. He asked them, 'Monks, is there a sick monk in that dwelling over there?' 'Yes, venerable sir, there is.' 'Monks, what is his sickness?' 'Venerable sir, he has dysentery.' 'Monks, does he have an attendant?' 'No, venerable sir, he does not.' 'Monks, then why don't the monks attend to him?' 'Venerable sir, he doesn't do anything for the monks, which is why they don't attend to him.'

'Monks, you have no mother, you have no father, who might tend to you. If you do not tend to one another, who then will tend to you? Monks, whoever would tend to me should tend to the sick.'

Mahāvagga VIII.26: *Vinaya* I.301–302, trans. G.A.S.

L.54 Helping a woman in labour

This passage concerns Suppavāsā, a woman who had had a long pregnancy and had been in labour for several days, in great pain. She had great faith in the Buddha, and when she called on him for help, at a distance, he used his power to ensure she had an easy delivery.

Afflicted by painful, sharp, grating and stabbing pains, she put up with this with three thoughts: 'A perfectly awakened Buddha, truly, is the Blessed One, who teaches Dhamma for the sake of abandoning the pain of such a form as this; well conducted, truly, is the Blessed One's Sangha of disciples, which practises for the sake of abandoning pain of such a form as this; perfect happiness, truly, is nirvana, wherein pain of such a form as this is not found.'

Then Suppavāsā, the Koliyan's daughter, addressed her husband, saying, 'You should go and approach the Blessed One; and having approached him, you should pay respects to him with your head at his feet on my behalf and ask for my freedom from affliction, freedom from impediment, lightness of body, strength and moving about in comfort ... [and tell him of my painful conditions and three thoughts].'

... [So he did so, and the Blessed One replied:] 'May Suppavāsā, the Koliyan's daughter, be at ease; may she be healthy, may she give birth to a healthy son.' And with that utterance, moreover, from the Blessed One, Suppavāsā, the Koliyan's' daughter, became at ease, healthy, and gave birth to a healthy son.

...[When the husband returned to his wife and saw what had happened, he said:] 'It is truly a marvel, my lady, it is truly an unprecedented thing, my lady, this state of great psychic potency, this state of great majesty, of the Tathāgata, inasmuch, namely, as this Suppavāsa ... can with this utterance from the Blessed One, have become at ease, healthy and have given birth to a healthy son', at which he became delighted, jubilant, filled with joy and happiness.

Suppavāsa Sutta: Udāna 15-16, trans. P.H.

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Sleeping and eating

How the Buddha slept *L.55*

These passages say how the Buddha mindfully went to sleep and slept well.

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel Sanctuary. Then when the night was fading, the Blessed One, having spent much of the night walking back and forth in the open, washed his feet, entered his dwelling, and lay down on his right side in the lion's posture with one leg overlapping the other, mindful and clearly comprehending, having attended to the idea of rising.

Supati Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.107 < 239–240>, trans. G.A. Somaratne.

'But does Venerable Gotama recall sleeping during the day?' 'Aggivessana, I recall that In the last month of the hot season, on returning from my alms-round, after my meal, I lay out my robe folded in four, and lying down on my right side, I fall asleep mindful and fully aware.

Mahā-saccaka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.249, trans. G.A.S.

He indeed always sleeps well, the brahmin who is fully quenched, who does not cling to sensual pleasures, and is cool at heart, without acquisitions.

Having cut off all attachments, having removed care from the heart, the peaceful one sleeps well, having attained peace of mind.

Sudatta Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.212 <458>, trans. G.A.S.

Can meat be accepted in a renunciant's alms-bowl? *L.56*

This passage makes it clear that monks and nuns should not accept alms-food containing flesh if they have seen, heard or suspected that the flesh came from a being that was killed specifically to feed them. It also sees anyone involved in slaughtering an animal as generating bad karmic results for themselves. Monastics, though, may accept meat bought by a lay donor in a market. For a lay Buddhist to kill animals or fish and sell their flesh would be wrong livelihood, though many lay Buddhists do include some meat, such as fish, in their own diets.

Then Jīvaka Komārabhacca went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, I have heard this: They slaughter living beings for the renunciant Gotama; the renunciant Gotama knowingly eats meat prepared for him from animals killed for his sake. Venerable sir, do those who speak thus say what has been said by the Blessed One, and not misrepresent him with what is contrary to fact? Do they explain in accordance with the Dhamma in such a way that nothing which provides a ground for censure can be legitimately deduced from their assertions?'

'Jīvaka, those who speak thus do not say what has been said by me, but misrepresent me with what is untrue and contrary to fact. Jīvaka, I say that there are three instances in which meat should not be eaten: when it is seen, heard, or suspected that the living being has been slaughtered for oneself. I say that meat should not be eaten in these

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three instances. I say that there are three instances in which meat may be eaten: when it is not seen, not heard, and not suspected that the living being has been slaughtered for oneself. I say that meat may be eaten in these three instances.'

'Venerable sir, I have heard this: "Brahmā abides in loving kindness." Venerable sir, the Blessed One is my visible witness to that; for the Blessed One abides in loving kindness.' ...

'Venerable sir, I have heard this: "Brahmā abides in equanimity." Venerable sir, the Blessed One is my visible witness to that; for the Blessed One abides in equanimity.'

'Jīvaka, any attachment, any hate, any delusion whereby cruelty or discontent or aversion might arise have been abandoned by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with so that they are no longer subject to future arising. If what you said referred to that, then I allow it to you.'

'Venerable sir, what I said referred to precisely that.'

'Jīvaka, if anyone slaughters a living being for the Tathāgata or his disciple, he accumulates much detrimental karma in five instances: When he says: "Go and fetch that living being", this is the first instance in which he accumulates much detrimental karma. When that living being experiences pain and grief on being led along with a neck-halter, this is the second instance in which he accumulates much detrimental karma. When he says: "Go and slaughter that living being, this is the third instance in which he accumulates much detrimental karma. When that living being experiences pain and grief on being slaughtered, this is the fourth instance in which he accumulates much detrimental karma. When he provides the Tathāgata or his disciple with food that is not permissible, that is the fifth instance in which he accumulates much detrimental karma. Anyone who slaughters a living being for the Tathāgata or his disciple lays up much detrimental karma in these five instances.

Jīvaka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.368–371, trans. G.A.S.

L.57 Material support for Buddhism need not be exclusive

In this passage, a well-off supporter of Jainism has, after a conversation with the Buddha, declared that he wishes to be his follower. The Buddha's response is an open and generous one.

'Now Sīha, make a proper investigation: this is appropriate in the case of well-known men like yourself.'

'I, Blessed One, am truly very pleased and satisfied with what the Blessed One said to me. ... For if members of other sects had gained me as a disciple, they would have paraded a banner all around Vesāli, saying "General Sīha has joined our disciples." ... So ... may the Blessed One accept me as a lay follower going for refuge from this day onwards for as long as life lasts.'

'For a long time, Sīha, your family has given generous support to the Niganṭhas (Jains). Will you think to still give alms when they approach you?'

'I, Blessed One, am truly very pleased and satisfied with what the Blessed One said to me. ... I have heard, Blessed One, "The renunciant Gotama speaks thus, 'Gifts should be given to me only, not to others

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....; gifts should be given to my disciples only, not to the disciples of others ...'." But then the Blessed One urged me to give to the Niganṭhas too. Indeed, Blessed One, we will know the right time for that.'

Mahāvagga: Vinaya I.236–237, trans. P.H.

Composing and enjoying poetry

Responding to verses with verses *L.58*

Here the Buddha playfully exchanges verses with a cattleman on the happiness of lay life and renunciant life.

'I am with my rice cooked, milking done', said Dhaniya the cattleman. 'I live with my people along the banks of the Mahī. My hut is roofed, fire is lit; so if you want, (rain) god, go ahead and rain.'

'I am free from anger, with stubbornness gone', said the Blessed One. I live for one night along the banks of the Mahī. My hut is open, fire is out; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'No mosquitoes or gadflies are to be found', said Dhaniya the cattleman; 'the cows roam in the marshy meadow where the grasses flourish. They could stand the rain if it came; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'A raft, well-made, has been lashed together', said the Blessed One; having crossed over, gone to the far shore (nirvana), I have subdued the flood. There is (now) no need of a raft; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'My wife is compliant, not careless', said Dhaniya, the cattleman; 'she has lived with me long, and is charming. I hear no evil about her at all; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'My mind is compliant, released', said the Blessed One, 'and has long been nurtured, well tamed. No evil is to be found in me; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'I support myself on my earnings', said Dhaniya the cattleman; 'and my sons live in harmony, in good health. I hear no evil about them at all; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'I am no one's employee', said the Blessed One. 'I wander the whole world on gains (given). I have no need of earnings; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'There are cows, young bulls', said Dhaniya the cattleman, 'and cows in calf, also breeding cows. There is a great bull, the leader of the herd; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'There are no cows, no young bulls, said the Blessed One, 'no cows in calf or breeding cows. There is no great bull, the leader of the herd; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'The stakes are dug-in, immovable', said Dhaniya the cattleman; 'the new muñja-grass halters, well-woven; not even young bulls could break; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

'Having broken my bonds like a great bull, like a great elephant tearing a rotting vine; I never again will lie in a womb; so if you want, god, go ahead and rain.'

The great cloud rained down straightaway, filling the lowlands and high. Hearing the god pour down, Dhaniya stated this meaning:

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'How great our gain that we have gazed on the Blessed One! We go to him, the one with vision, for refuge. May you be our teacher, O great sage?'

My wife and I are compliant. Let us follow the holy life under the Fortunate One. Gone to the far shore of ageing and death, let us put an end to the painful.'

'Those with children delight because of their children', said Māra, the evil one. 'Those with cattle delight because of their cows. A person's delight comes from acquisitions, since a person with no acquisitions does not delight.'

'Those with children grieve because of their children', said the Blessed One. 'Those with cattle grieve because of their cows. A person's grief comes from acquisitions, since a person with no acquisitions does not grieve.'

Dhaniya Sutta: *Sutta-nipāta* 18–34, trans. G.A.S.

L.59 Enjoying poetry

*In this passage, the Buddha enjoys the poetry of the monk Vaṅgīsa, who was the foremost disciple of those gifted with inspirational speech (*Aṅguttara-nikāya *I.24). He had the skill in composing spontaneous verses.*

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park, together with a large community of monks, with 1,250 monks. Now on that occasion the Blessed One was instructing, exhorting, inspiring, and gladdening the monks with a talk on Dhamma concerning nirvana. And those monks were listening to Dhamma with eager ears, attending to it as a matter of vital concern, directing their whole mind to it.

Then it occurred to Venerable Vaṅgīsa: 'The Blessed One is instructing the monks ... Let me extol the Blessed One to his face with suitable verses.' Then Venerable Vaṅgīsa rose from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, and raising his joined hands in reverential salutation towards the Blessed One, said to him, 'Exalted One, an inspiration has come to me! Blessed One, an inspiration has come to me!' 'Vaṅgīsa, then express your inspiration.' Then Venerable Vaṅgīsa extolled the Blessed One to his face with suitable verses:

'Over a thousand monks here attend upon the Blessed One as he teaches the dust-free Dhamma, nirvana, inaccessible to fear.

They listen to the stainless Dhamma taught by the perfectly awakened Buddha. Indeed, the awakened one shines honoured by the community of monks.

Venerable sir, your name is Nāga,[102] the best seer of the seers. Like a great cloud bearing rain you pour down on the disciples.

Having emerged from his daytime abode from desire to behold the teacher, your disciple Vaṅgīsa, O great hero, bows down in devout respect at your feet.'

'Vaṅgīsa, had you already thought out these verses, or did they occur to you spontaneously?' 'Venerable sir, I had not already thought out these verses; they occurred to me spontaneously.' 'Vaṅgīsa, in that

102 A bull-elephant, an image of controlled power.

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case, let some more verses, not already thought out, occur to you.' 'Yes, venerable sir', Venerable Vaṅgīsa replied. Then Venerable Vaṅgīsa extolled the Blessed One with some more verses that had not been previously thought out:

'Having overcome the deviant course of Māra's path, you fare having demolished barrenness of mind. Behold one who is the liberator from bondage, unattached, analysing into parts.

For the sake of leading us across the flood you declared the path with its many aspects. The seers of Dhamma stand immovable in that deathless declared by you.

The light-maker, having pierced right through, saw the transcendence of all stations (of rebirth consciousness); having known and realized it himself, he taught the chief matter to the five.

When the Dhamma has been so well taught, what negligence is there for those who understand it? Therefore, living diligent in the Blessed One's teaching, one should always reverently train in it.'

Parosahassa Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.192–193 <414–417>, trans. G.A.S.

The last months of the Buddha's life

The Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta *of the* Dīgha-nikāya *(II.72–168) is the longest single sutta in the Pāli Canon. It deals with the last three months of the Buddha's life, in his eightieth year, culminating with his great* (mahā) parinibbāna*: the final nirvana that comes at the death of an awakened person.*

Overcoming a severe illness, and teaching mindfulness as the way to take refuge in oneself and the Dhamma *L.60*

At that time the Blessed One spoke to the monks: 'Monks, go now and seek shelter anywhere in the neighbourhood of Vesāli where you are welcome, among acquaintances and friends, and there spend the rainy season. As for me, I shall spend the rainy season in this very place, in the village of Beluva.' 'Very well, venerable sir, the monks said.'

When the Blessed One had entered upon the rainy season, there arose in him a severe illness. Sharp and deadly pains came upon him. And the Blessed One endured them mindfully, clearly comprehending and unperturbed.

Then the Blessed One considered: 'It would not be fitting if I came to my final nirvana (at death) without addressing those who attended on me, without taking leave of the community of monks. Then let me suppress this illness by strength of will, resolve to maintain the life-sustaining activities, and live on.' And the Blessed One suppressed the illness by strength of will, resolved to maintain the life-sustaining activities, and lived on. So it came about that the Blessed One's illness was allayed. And the Blessed One recovered from that illness; and soon after his recovery he came out from his dwelling place and sat down in the shade of a building, on a seat prepared for him.

Then Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One, respectfully greeted him, and sitting down at one side, he spoke to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, fortunate it is for me to see the Blessed One at ease

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again! Venerable sir, fortunate it is for me to see the Blessed One recovered! Venerable sir, for truly, when I saw the Blessed One's sickness it was as though my own body became weak as a creeper, everything around became dim to me, and my senses failed me. Yet, venerable sir, I still had some little comfort in the thought that the Blessed One would not come to his final nirvana until he had given some last instructions respecting the community of monks.' Thus spoke Venerable Ānanda.

The Blessed One answered him: 'Ānanda, what more does the community of monks expect from me? I have set forth the Dhamma without making any distinction of esoteric and exoteric Dhamma. Ānanda, there is nothing with regard to the teachings that the Tathāgata holds to the last with the closed fist of a teacher who keeps some things back. Whoever may think that it is he who should lead the community of monks, or that the community depends upon him, it is such a one that would have to give last instructions respecting them. But, Ānanda, the Tathāgata has no such idea as that it is he who should lead the community of monks, or that the community depends upon him. So what instructions should he have to give respecting the community of monks?

Ānanda, now I am frail, old, aged, far gone in years. This is my eightieth year, and my life is spent. Ānanda, even as an old cart is held together with much difficulty, so the body of the Tathāgata is kept going only with supports. Ānanda, it is only when the Tathāgata, disregarding any characteristics of things in the meditative concentration that is free of characteristics,[103] that his body is more comfortable.

Therefore, Ānanda, dwell with yourselves as islands (of safety), yourselves as refuges, with no other (person as) refuge; with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other (teaching as) refuge. And, Ānanda, how does a monk dwell with himself as an island, himself as refuge, with no other as refuge, with Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as refuge, with no other as refuge?

When he dwells, in respect of the body, contemplating the body, possessed of effort, clearly comprehending, and mindful, removing intense desire for and unhappiness with the world; when he dwells contemplating feelings in feelings, the mind in the mind, and reality-patterns[104] in reality-patterns, possessed of effort, clearly comprehending, and mindful, removing intense desire for and unhappiness with the world, then, truly, he dwells with himself as an island, himself as refuge, with no other as his refuge, with the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as refuge, with no other as refuge.

Ānanda, those monks of mine, who now or after I am gone, dwell with themselves as islands, themselves as refuges, with no other (person) as refuge, with the Dhamma as island, with the Dhamma as refuge, with no other (teaching)as refuge: it is they who will become the highest, if they have the desire to learn.'

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.98–101, trans. G.A.S.

103 *animitta:* beyond any indication or sign of any characteristic.

104 Various collections of basic processes (*dhammas*) into which Buddhist teachings analyse reality.

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Relinquishing the impetus for a full life-span *L.61*

In this passage, the old and ill Buddha, having seen that he has accomplished his task, abandons the impetus for sustaining the longest human life-span, and accepts that he will live for only three more months.

Then the Blessed One, getting ready in the forenoon, took bowl and robe and went into Vesāli for alms. After the alms-round and meal, on his return, he spoke to Venerable Ānanda, 'Ānanda, take up a mat, and let us spend the day at the Cāpāla shrine.' 'Very well, venerable sir.' And Venerable Ānanda took up a mat and followed behind the Blessed One, step by step. And the Blessed One went to the Cāpāla shrine and sat down on the seat prepared for him. And when Venerable Ānanda had seated himself at one side after he had paid respect to the Blessed One, the Blessed One said to him, 'Ānanda, delightful is Vesāli; delightful are the shrines of Udena, Gotamaka, Sattambaka, Bahuputta, Sārandada, and Cāpāla.'

... And when Venerable Ānanda had gone away, Māra the evil one approached the Blessed One. And standing at one side he spoke to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, now let the Blessed One come to his final nirvana (by dying). Let the Fortunate One attain final nirvana! The time has come for the final nirvana of the Blessed One. Venerable sir, for the Blessed One spoke these words to me (soon after my awakening): "Evil one, I shall not come to my final nirvana until I have monk disciples ... nun disciples ... laymen disciples ... and laywomen disciples who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, versed in Dhamma, practising Dhamma in accordance with Dhamma, practising the proper way, conducting themselves according to Dhamma, who will pass on what they have gained from their own teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyse it, make it clear, till they shall be able by means of Dhamma to refute false teachings that have arisen, and teach the Dhamma of wondrous effect." Venerable sir, now the Blessed Ones' disciples, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen have ... [become in just this way]. So, venerable sir, let the Blessed One come to his final nirvana. The time has come for the final nirvana of the Blessed One.

Venerable sir, for the Blessed One spoke these words to me: "Evil one, I shall not come to my final nirvana until this holy life taught by me has become successful, prosperous, far-renowned, popular, and widespread, until it is well proclaimed among gods and humans." Venerable sir, this too has come to pass in just this way. So, venerable sir, let the Blessed One come to his final nirvana. Let the Fortunate One attain final nirvana! The time has come for the final nirvana of the Blessed One.'

When this was said, the Blessed One spoke to Māra the evil one, 'Evil one, do not trouble yourself. Before long the final nirvana of the Tathāgata will come about. Three months hence the Tathāgata will attain final nirvana.

So the Blessed One at the Cāpāla shrine, mindfully and clearly comprehending, relinquished the impetus for a full life-span, and when this occurred there was a great earthquake, terrible, hair-raising, and accompanied by thunder.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.102–107, trans. G.A.S.

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L.62 The last admonition

In this teaching, the Buddha sums up the path he had taught as seven sets of qualities which are known as the thirty-seven qualities conducive to awakening.

'Ānanda, let us go to the hall of the gabled house, in the Great Forest.' 'Very well, venerable sir', said Venerable Ānanda. Then the Blessed One, with Venerable Ānanda, went to the hall of the gabled house, in the Great Forest. And there he spoke to Venerable Ānanda, 'Ānanda, go now and assemble in the hall of audience all the monks who dwell in the neighbourhood of Vesāli.' 'Very well, venerable sir', said Venerable Ānanda.

And Venerable Ānanda gathered all the monks who dwelt in the neighbourhood of Vesāli, and assembled them in the hall of audience. And then, paying respect to the Blessed One and standing at one side, he said, 'Venerable sir, the community of monks is assembled. Now let the Blessed One do as he wishes.'

Thereupon the Blessed One entered the hall of audience, and taking the seat prepared for him, he exhorted the monks: 'Monks, now I say to you that these qualities of which I have higher knowledge and which I have made known to you – these you should thoroughly learn, cultivate, develop, and frequently practise, that the holy life may be established and may long endure, for the welfare and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, wellbeing, and happiness of gods and humans.

Monks, what are these qualities? They are the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of success, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of awakening, and the noble eightfold path.[105] Monks, these are the qualities of which I have higher knowledge, which I have made known to you, and which you should thoroughly learn, cultivate, develop, and frequently practise, that the holy life may be established and may long endure, for the welfare and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, wellbeing, and happiness of gods and humans.'

The Blessed One said to the monks further: 'Monks, I exhort you: conditioned things are of a nature to decay, but by attentiveness you will succeed. The time of the Tathāgata's final nirvana is near. Three months hence the Tathāgata will attain final nirvana.'

And having spoken these words, the Fortunate One, the teacher, spoke again:

My years are now fully ripe. The life left is short.
Departing, I go hence from you, relying on myself alone.
Monks, be heedful, mindful and of ethical discipline!
With firm resolve, guard your own minds!
Who heedfully pursues the Dhamma and the discipline
Shall go beyond the round of births and make an end of the painful.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.119–121, trans. G.A.S.

105 For the foundations of mindfulness, the right efforts and the eightfold path, see Th.91, for the five faculties and powers, see Th.89, for the factors of awakening, see end of Th.139. The four bases of success are energy, and concentration aided by desire to act, vigour, mental orientation, and investigation.

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The last meal *L.63*

Here we see the Buddha eating a meal that brought on his final illness, leading to his death, as well as his concern that no-one would blame the person who had given him the meal.

At one time, while walking on tour among the Mallas together with a large community of monks, the Blessed One arrived at Pāvā. And the Blessed One stayed at Pāvā in the mango grove of Cunda the smith. Now Cunda the smith heard, 'It is said that the Blessed One, while walking on tour among the Mallas together with a large community of monks, has arrived at Pāvā and is staying at Pāvā in the mango grove.'

Then Cunda the smith approached the Blessed One, paid respect, and sat down to one side. The Blessed One instructed, roused, inspired, and gladdened him by Dhamma-talk. Then Cunda the smith said to the Blessed One, 'Venerable sir, please consent to my providing a meal tomorrow for the Blessed One together with the community of monks.' The Blessed One consented by remaining silent.

Then, on seeing that the Blessed One had consented, Cunda the smith arose from his seat, paid respect to the Blessed One, and keeping his right side towards him, went away. When the night had ended Cunda the smith prepared in his own dwelling choice solid and soft food including a quantity of soft pork,[106] and announced to the Blessed One the time for the meal, 'Venerable sir, it is time; the meal is ready.'

Then the Blessed One, in the forenoon, putting on his robe and taking his bowl and robe, together with the community of monks, went to the dwelling of Cunda the smith. On arriving he sat down on the seat prepared for him and said to Cunda the smith, 'Cunda, serve me with the soft pork you have prepared, and serve the community of monks with the other food.' 'Very well, venerable sir', said Cunda the smith.

He served the Blessed One with the soft pork and the community of monks with the other prepared food. Then the Blessed One said to Cunda the smith, 'Cunda, bury in a pit what is left over of the soft pork, for I do not see in the world with its gods, māras and brahmās, with its people, renunciants, brahmins, kings and the masses, anyone here who could eat and fully digest it other than the Tathāgata.' 'Very well, venerable sir', said Cunda the smith. He buried what was left over of the soft pork in a pit. Then he turned to the Blessed One, paid respect, and sat down to one side. As he sat there the Blessed One instructed, roused, inspired, and gladdened him with Dhamma-talk. Then he rose from his seat and departed.

Then, after the Blessed One had eaten the food of Cunda the smith, a severe sickness arose in him, dysentery accompanied by the passing of blood and dire and deadly pains. These pains the Blessed One endured, mindful and clearly comprehending, without complaint. Then the Blessed One said to Venerable Ānanda, 'Come, Ānanda, we will go to Kusinārā.' And Venerable Ānanda gave his consent to the Blessed One, saying, 'Yes, venerable sir.'

106 *sūkara-maddava*, literally 'pig-mild': the *Udāna* commentary (p.399) says that the 'great commentary' sees this as tender pork available from the market, but that others see it as bamboo shoots or mushrooms growing in a place trampled (*maddita*) by pigs, or a kind of elixir. See L.56 on the Buddha's view on the circumstances under which a renunciant may accept meat.

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On eating the food given by Cunda the smith, so I heard,
The wise one felt a dire sickness, as to end in death.
When he ate the soft pork, a dire sickness arose in the teacher.

Then being purged, the Blessed One announced, 'I will go to the city of Kusinārā.'

Then the Blessed One stepped off the road, went up to the foot of a tree, and said to Venerable Ānanda, 'Come, Ānanda, fold my robe in four and prepare a seat. I am tired and will sit down.' 'Yes, venerable sir', Venerable Ānanda replied to the Blessed One, and folding the robe in four, he prepared a seat and the Blessed One sat down. Sitting there the Blessed One addressed Venerable Ānanda, 'Come, Ānanda, fetch me some water, Ānanda, I am thirsty and would drink.'

Thereupon Venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, just now as many as five hundred wagons have crossed over the stream and the shallow water stirred up by the wheels flows muddied. But there is the river Kukudhā close by, with clear, pleasant, cool, pure water easily approachable and delightfully situated. Here the Blessed One can drink the water and refresh his body.'

Then a second time and a third time the Blessed One said, 'Come, Ānanda, fetch me some water' 'Very well, venerable sir', Venerable Ānanda replied to the Blessed One, and taking a bowl, he went to the stream. Then, as Venerable Ānanda approached, that shallow water, stirred up by the wheels and flowing muddied, flowed pure, clear, and unmuddied. Then Venerable Ānanda considered, 'It is indeed wonderful, it is indeed marvellous, the great supernormal potency and power of the Tathāgata! This stream ... now flows pure, clear, and unmuddied.'

And taking some water in the bowl, he approached the Blessed One and said, 'It is indeed wonderful, it is indeed marvellous, the great supernormal potency and power of the Tathāgata! ... Venerable sir, drink the water. Fortunate One, drink the water.'

And the Blessed One drank the water. Then the Blessed One, together with a large community of monks, went to the river Kukudhā, and entering into the water, he bathed and drank. Having come out of the water, he went to a mango grove and said to Venerable Cundaka, 'Come, Cundaka, fold my robe in four and prepare a couch. I am tired and will lie down'. 'Yes, venerable sir', Venerable Cundaka replied, and folding the robe in four, he prepared a couch. And the Blessed One lay down on his right side in the lion's resting posture, placing one foot on the other, mindful and clearly comprehending, determining the time of arising. And Venerable Cundaka sat down in front of the Blessed One.

The awakened one came to the river Kukudhā, with pure, pleasant, clear waters.
The teacher immersed his weary frame, the Tathāgata, incomparable in the world.
Having bathed, drunk, and come back out, the honoured teacher amid the group of monks, the foremost teacher, the Blessed One here To the monk called Cundaka he said, 'Prepare my robe folded into four.'
Asked by the composed one, Cunda quickly laid out the four-folded robe. The teacher lay down his weary frame and Cunda sat down there in front.

Then the Blessed One said to Venerable Ānanda: 'Ānanda, it may be

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that someone will cause remorse in Cunda the smith by saying, "Friend Cunda, it is a loss for you, it is an ill gain for you, that the Tathāgata attained final nirvana after he received his last alms food from you." That remorse of Cunda the smith should be dispelled in this way: "Friend Cunda, it is a gain for you, it is a great gain for you, that the Tathāgata attained final nirvana after he received his last alms food from you. Friend Cunda, face to face I heard it from the Blessed One, face to face I learnt it: 'These two offerings of alms food are of equal fruit, of equal result, of very much greater fruit and profit than any other offering of alms food. What two? That offering of alms food after having eaten which the Tathāgata realized supreme awakening and that offering of alms food after having eaten which the Tathāgata attained final nirvana in the nirvana-element with no fuel left. These two offerings of alms food are of equal fruit, of equal result, of very much greater fruit and profit than any other offering of alms food'." A deed has been performed by the worthy Cunda the smith conducive to long life, beauty, happiness, heaven, fame, and supremacy. In this way the remorse of Cunda the smith should be dispelled.'

Cunda Sutta: Udāna 81–85,[107] trans. G.A.S.

The last rest *L.64*

This passage shows deities causing trees to flower and rain down flowers in devotion to the Buddha, yet he says that true devotion to him is to be shown by practising the Dhamma he taught.

Then the Blessed One addressed Venerable Ānanda, saying, 'Come, Ānanda, let us cross to the farther bank of the river Hiraññavatī, and go to the Mallas' sāla grove, in the vicinity of Kusinārā.' 'Yes, venerable sir.' And the Blessed One, together with a large company of monks, went to the further bank of the river Hiraññavatī, to the sāla grove of the Mallas, in the vicinity of Kusinārā.

And there Blessed One spoke to Venerable Ānanda, 'Ānanda, please prepare for me a couch between the twin sāla trees, with the head to the north. Ānanda, I am weary and want to lie down.' 'Yes, venerable sir.' And Venerable Ānanda did as the Blessed One asked him to do. Then the Blessed One lay down on his right side, in the lion's posture, resting one foot upon the other, and so disposed himself, mindfully and clearly comprehending.

At that time the twin sāla trees broke out in full bloom, though it was not the season of flowering. And the blossoms rained upon the mortal body of the Tathāgata and dropped and scattered and were strewn upon it in devotion to the Tathāgata. And celestial mandārava flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder from the sky rained down upon the mortal body of the Tathāgata, and dropped and scattered and were strewn upon it in devotion to the Tathāgata. And the sound of heavenly voices and heavenly instruments made music in the air out in devotion to the Tathāgata.

And the Blessed One spoke to Venerable Ānanda, saying: 'Ānanda, the twin sāla trees are in full bloom, though it is not the season of flow-

107 And *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya* II.126–129 and 135–136.

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ering. ... And the sound of heavenly voices and heavenly instruments makes music in the air in devotion to the Tathāgata.

Ānanda, yet it is not thus that the Tathāgata is respected, venerated, esteemed, shown devotion, and honoured in the highest degree. But, Ānanda, whatever monk or nun, layman or laywoman, practises Dhamma in accordance with Dhamma, practises rightly, walks in the way of Dhamma, it is by such a one that the Tathāgata is respected, venerated, esteemed, shown devotion, and honoured in the highest degree. Therefore, Ānanda, thus should you train yourselves: "We shall practise Dhamma in accordance with Dhamma, practise rightly, and walk in the way of Dhamma."'

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.137–138, trans. G.A.S.

L.65 Ānanda's grief

Here the Buddha seeks to assuage the grief of Ānanda, the monk who had been his personal attendant for many years.

Then Venerable Ānanda went into the dwelling and leaned against the doorpost and wept, (thinking), 'I am still but a learner, with much to do (to attain arahantship). But, alas, my teacher, who was so compassionate towards me, is about to attain final nirvana!

And the Blessed One spoke to the monks, 'Monks, where is Ānanda?' 'Venerable sir, Venerable Ānanda has gone into the dwelling and there stands leaning against the doorpost, weeping, "I am still but a learner, with much to do (to attain arahantship). But, alas, my teacher, who was so compassionate towards me, is about to attain final nirvana!'

Then the Blessed One asked a certain monk to bring Venerable Ānanda to him, saying, 'Go, monk, and say to Ānanda, "Friend Ānanda, the teacher calls you."' And that monk went and spoke to Venerable Ānanda as the Blessed One had asked him to. And Venerable Ānanda went to the Blessed One, paid respect to him, and sat down on one side.

Then the Blessed One spoke to Venerable Ānanda: 'Enough, Ānanda! Do not grieve, do not lament! For have I not taught from the very beginning that with all that is dear and beloved there must be change, separation, and severance? So how could anything else be obtained here, Ānanda? Of that which is born, come into being, conditioned, and subject to decay, how can one say, "May it not come to dissolution!"? There can be no such state of things.

Ānanda, now for a long time, you have served the Tathāgata with loving kindness in deed, word, and thought, graciously, pleasantly, wholeheartedly and beyond measure. Ānanda, you are one who has done good! Now you should put forth energy, and soon you too will be free from the intoxicating inclinations.'

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.143–144, trans. G.A.S.

L.66 The Mallas' alarm at the impending death of the Buddha

'Ānanda, go now to Kusinārā and announce to the Mallas: "Vāseṭṭhas, today in the last watch of the night, the Tathāgata's final nirvana will take place. O Vāseṭṭhas, approach, draw near! Do not be remorseful later at the thought, 'In our township it was that the Tathāgata's final nirvana took place, but we failed to see him at the end!"'.' 'Very well,

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venerable sir.' And Venerable Ānanda prepared himself, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went with a companion to Kusinārā.

Now at that time the Mallas had gathered in the council hall for some public business. And Venerable Ānanda approached them and announced: 'Vāseṭṭhas, today in the last watch of the night, the Tathāgata's final nirvana will take place. Vāseṭṭhas, approach, draw near! Do not be remorseful later at the thought, "In our township it was that the Tathāgata's final nirvana took place, but we failed to see him at the end."'

When they heard Venerable Ānanda speak these words, the Mallas with their sons, their wives, and the wives of their sons, were sorely grieved, grieved at heart and afflicted; and some, with their hair all dishevelled, with arms uplifted in despair, wept; flinging themselves on the ground, they rolled from side to side, lamenting, 'Too soon has the Blessed One come to his final nirvana! Too soon has the Fortunate One come to his final nirvana! Too soon will the eye of the world vanish from sight!'

And thus afflicted and filled with grief, the Mallas, with their sons, their wives, and the wives of their sons, went to the sāla grove, the recreation park of the Mallas, to the place where Venerable Ānanda was. And Venerable Ānanda considered, 'If I were to allow the Mallas of Kusinārā to pay reverence to the Blessed One one by one, the night will have given way to dawn before they are all presented to him. Therefore let me divide them up according to clan, each family in a group, and so present them to the Blessed One thus: "The Malla of such and such a name, venerable sir, with his wives and children, his attendants and his friends, pays homage at the feet of the Blessed One."'

And Venerable Ānanda divided the Mallas up according to clan, each family in a group, and presented them to the Blessed One. So it was that Venerable Ānanda caused the Mallas of Kusinārā to be presented to the Blessed One by clans, each family in a group, even in the first watch of the night.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.147–148, trans. G.A.S.

The last convert, and a question on other teachers *L.67*

Now at that time a wandering ascetic named Subhadda was dwelling at Kusinārā. And Subhadda the wandering ascetic heard it said, 'Today in the third watch of the night, the final nirvana of the renunciant Gotama will take place.'

And the wandering ascetic Subhadda considered: 'I have heard it said by old and venerable wandering ascetics, teachers of teachers, that the arising of Tathāgatas, the arahants, perfectly awakened Buddhas, is rare in the world. Yet this very day, in the last watch of the night, the final nirvana of the renunciant Gotama will take place. Now there is in me a doubt; but to this extent I have faith in the renunciant Gotama, that he could so teach me Dhamma as to remove that doubt.'

Then the wandering ascetic Subhadda went to the sāla grove, the recreation park of the Mallas, and drew near to Venerable Ānanda, and informed Venerable Ānanda of his concern, saying, 'Friend Ānanda, it would be good if I could be allowed into the presence of the renun-

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ciant Gotama.' But Venerable Ānanda answered him, 'Enough, friend Subhadda! Do not trouble the Tathāgata. The Blessed One is weary.' Yet a second and a third time the wandering ascetic Subhadda made his request, and a second and a third time Venerable Ānanda refused him.

And the Blessed One heard the talk between them, and he called Venerable Ānanda and said: 'Stop, Ānanda! Do not refuse Subhadda. Ānanda, Subhadda may be allowed into the presence of the Tathāgata. For whatever he will ask me, he will ask for the sake of knowledge, and not as an offence. And the answer I give him, that he will readily understand.'

Thereupon Venerable Ānanda said to the wandering ascetic Subhadda, 'Friend Subhadda, go then, the Blessed One gives you leave.' Then the wandering ascetic Subhadda approached the Blessed One and saluted him courteously. And having exchanged with him pleasant and civil greetings, the wandering ascetic Subhadda seated himself at one side and addressed the Blessed One: 'Venerable Gotama, there are renunciants and brahmins who are chiefs of great communities of disciples, who have large retinues, who are leaders of schools, well known and renowned, and held in high esteem by the multitude, such teachers as Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambala, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta.[108] Have all of these attained realization, as each of them would have it believed, or has none of them, or is it that some have attained realization and others not?'

'Enough, Subhadda! Let it be as it may, whether all of them have attained realization, as each of them would have it believed, or whether none of them has, or whether some have attained realization and others not. Subhadda, I will teach you Dhamma; listen and heed it well, and I will speak.' 'Very well, venerable sir.'

And the Blessed One spoke thus: 'Subhadda, in whatsoever Dhamma and discipline there is not found the noble eightfold path, neither is there found a true renunciant of the first, second, third, or fourth degree of saintliness.[109] But in whatsoever Dhamma and discipline there is found the noble eightfold path, there is found a true renunciant of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness. Now, Subhadda, in this Dhamma and discipline is found the noble eightfold path; and certainly here are also found true renunciants of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees of saintliness. Devoid of true renunciants are the systems of the other renunciants. But, Subhadda, if the monks live rightly, the world will not be destitute of arahants. ...

When this was said, the wandering ascetic Subhadda spoke to the Blessed One: 'Excellent, venerable sir, most excellent, venerable sir! Venerable sir, it is as if one were to set upright what had been overthrown, or to reveal what had been hidden, or to show the path to one who had gone astray, or to light a lamp in the darkness so that those with eyes might see – even so has the Blessed One set forth Dhamma in many ways. And so, venerable sir, I take my refuge in the Blessed

108 They were the popular six non-Buddhist renunciant teachers: fatalists, materialists, sceptics and Jains.

109 See 'Noble Ones' in Glossary.

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One, the Dhamma, and the Sangha of monks. May I receive from the Blessed One going forth and higher ordination?'

'Subhadda, whoever having been formerly a follower of another creed wishes to receive going forth and higher ordination[110] in this Dhamma and discipline remains on probation for a period of four months. At the end of those four months, if the monks are satisfied with him, they grant him going forth and higher ordination as a monk. Yet in this matter I recognize differences of personalities.'

'Venerable sir, if whoever having been formerly a follower of another creed wishes to receive going forth and higher ordination in this Dhamma and discipline remains on probation for a period of four months, and at the end of those four months, if the monks are satisfied with him, they grant him going forth and higher ordination as a monk – then I will remain on probation for a period of four years. And at the end of those four years, if the monks are satisfied with me, let them grant me going forth and higher ordination as a monk.'

But the Blessed One called Venerable Ānanda and said to him: 'Ānanda, let Subhadda go forth.' And Venerable Ānanda replied: 'Very well, venerable sir.' Then the wandering ascetic Subhadda said to Venerable Ānanda, 'Friend Ānanda, it is a gain for you all, a blessing, that in the presence of the teacher himself you have received the sprinkling of consecration as resident pupils.'

So it came about that the wandering ascetic Subhadda, in the presence of the Blessed One, received the going forth and higher ordination. And from the time of his ordination Venerable Subhadda remained alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, and resolute. And before long he attained to the goal for which a worthy man goes forth rightly from home to homelessness, the supreme goal of the holy life; and having by himself realized it with higher knowledge, he dwelt therein. He knew: 'Birth is destroyed, the requirements of the holy life have been fulfilled, what ought to be done has been done, and there is nothing more to be done hereafter.'

And Venerable Subhadda became yet another among the arahants and he was the last personal disciple of the Blessed One himself.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.148–153, trans. G.A.S.

The Buddha's last words *L.68*

In this passage, the Buddha checks that his disciples have no remaining questions, before uttering his last words after he is sure that they do not have any.

Now the Blessed One spoke to Venerable Ānanda, 'Ānanda, it may be that some among you may consider, "The teacher's instruction has ceased; now we have no teacher." But, Ānanda, it should not be so considered. Ānanda, for that which I have proclaimed and made known as the Dhamma and the monastic discipline, that shall be your teacher when I am gone.

And, Ānanda, whereas now the monks address one another as "friend", let it not be so when I am gone. Ānanda, the senior monks

110 'Going forth' from the world means to adopt a renunciant lifestyle, which on its own marks ordination as a novice in the monastic community. 'Higher ordination' marks becoming a full-fledged monk or nun.

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may address the junior ones by their name, their family name, or as "friend"; but the junior monks should address the senior ones as "venerable sir" or "your reverence."

Ānanda, if it is desired, the community may, when I am gone, abolish the lesser and minor rules.

Ānanda, when I am gone, let the brahmā penalty be imposed upon the monk Channa.'[111]

'Venerable sir, what is the brahmā penalty?' 'Ānanda, the monk Channa may say what he will, but the monks should neither converse with him, nor exhort him, nor admonish him.'

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: 'Monks, it may be that one of you is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the path or the practice. Then question, monks! Do not be given to remorse later on with the thought, "The teacher was with us face to face, yet face to face we failed to ask him."'

But when this was said, the monks were silent. And yet a second and a third time the Blessed One said to them: 'Monks, it may be that one of you is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the path or the practice. Then question, monks! Do not be given to remorse later on with the thought, "The teacher was with us face to face, yet face to face we failed to ask him."'

And for a second and a third time the monks were silent. Then the Blessed One said to them: 'Monks, it may be out of respect for the teacher that you ask no questions. Then, monks, let friend communicate it to friend (to ask on his behalf).' Yet still the monks were silent. And Venerable Ānanda spoke to the Blessed One: 'Marvellous it is, venerable sir, most wonderful it is! This faith I have in the community of monks that not even one monk is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the path or the practice.'

'Ānanda, out of faith you speak thus. But, Ānanda, here the Tathāgata knows for certain that among this community of monks there is not even one monk who is in doubt or perplexity as to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the path or the practice. For, Ānanda, among these five hundred monks even the lowest is a stream-enterer, secure from downfall, assured, and bound for awakening.'

And the Blessed One addressed the monks, 'Monks, behold now, I address you: conditioned things are of a nature to decay, but by attentiveness you will succeed!' This was the last utterance of the Tathāgata.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.154–156, trans. G.A.S.

L.69 The Buddha's passing away

After his last words, the Buddha goes through a series of meditative states: from the first meditative absorption (jhāna) to the second, third and fourth of these (see Th.140); then through the four formless states (see Th.142) - the spheres of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither-perception-nor-non-perception - then to the state of the cessation of perception

111 He was the charioteer that Gotama had during his palace life, and accompanied him for his renunciation. As a monk he was proud and resistant to acknowledge his faults. He later attained arahantship after becoming ashamed of the brahmā penalty being imposed on him (*Vinaya* II.292).

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and feeling. He then goes back down through all these states to the first absorption, then back up to the fourth absorption, from which he had attained awakening. Having demonstrated full self-mastery, he then passed away.

Having emerged from the fourth meditative absorption, immediately after this the Blessed One directly attained final nirvana.

When the Blessed One attained final nirvana, simultaneously with his final nirvana, Brahmā Sahampati[112] recited this verse:

All beings in the world will finally lay the body down,
Since such a one as the teacher, the peerless person in the world,
The Tathāgata, one endowed with powers, the awakened one, attained final nirvana.

When the Blessed One attained final nirvana, simultaneously with his final nirvana, Sakka[113] the king of gods recited this verse:

Impermanent indeed are conditioned things,
Their nature is to arise and decay.
Having arisen, they cease:
Happy is their stilling.

When the Blessed One attained final nirvana, simultaneously with his final nirvana, Venerable Ānanda recited this verse: [114]

Then there was terror, then there was trepidation,
When the awakened one who is perfect in all excellent qualities attained final nirvana.

When the Blessed One attained final nirvana, simultaneously with his final nirvana, Venerable Anuruddha recited these verses:

There was no more in-and-out breathing in the stable one of steady mind
When unstirred, bent on peace, the one with vision attained final nirvana.
With unshrinking mind he endured the pain;
Like the quenching of a lamp was the deliverance of the mind.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.156–157, trans. G.A.S.

112 On whom, see L.19 and 25.

113 On whom, see L.2, 31, 33, 36 and Th.34 and 38.

114 This verse is not in the *Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta*, but in an equivalent passage at *Saṃyutta-nikāya* I.157–59 <340–342>.

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CHAPTER 2

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE BUDDHA

THERAVĀDA

Th.1 **Qualities of the Buddha**

This is part of a passage on the Three Refuges (see Th.93) that is frequently chanted in Pāli in devotional settings, as well as being reflected on in devotional meditations.

Here, monks, a noble disciple who is endowed with confirmed confidence in the Buddha thus: 'The Blessed one is an arahant,[115] perfectly awakened Buddha, one endowed with knowledge and conduct, Fortunate One, knower of the worlds, incomparable trainer of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, awakened one, Blessed One.'

Rājā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.343, trans. P.H.

The Buddha's relation to the Dhamma

The nature of the Buddha is seen as closely related to the Dhamma, in the sense of his teachings, the path to the Buddhist goal, and this goal itself, nirvana.

Th.2 **Who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha**

Even if, monks, a monk should dwell seven hundred miles away, but be one who has not become covetous ... or with a mind of ill-will, ... (and is) one with mindfulness present, clearly comprehending, composed, with one-pointedness of mind, restrained senses, then such a one is really in my presence. What is the reason for this? For this monk sees Dhamma, and, in seeing Dhamma, sees me.

Saṅghāṭikaṇṇe Sutta: Itivuttaka 91, trans. P.H.

Th.3 **Buddhas as having become Dhamma**

In this passage, the arahant *Mahā-kaccāna describes the Buddha as the source of explanations of Dhamma.*

Knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees; he has become vision, become knowledge, become Dhamma, become the highest, he is the sayer, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the deathless (nirvaṇa), the master of Dhamma, the Tathāgata (see L.20).

Madhupiṇḍika Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.111, trans. P.H.

115 See Th.9.

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The Buddha as embodying Dhamma *Th.4*

These passages introduce the compound term 'dhamma-kāya' *(Pāli, Skt* dharma-kāya*), which was to be much reflected on and extended in Mahāyāna Buddhism (see M.9–11, V.2).* Kāya *means 'body', but can mean this in the sense of a 'collection', including a collection of mental qualities. In a compound, one cannot tell if the first word is singular or plural, so* dhamma- *can mean the Dhamma, or* dhammas*, qualities developed on the path. In the first passage, the compound is an adjective and seems to mean that the Buddha is one whose 'body' of qualities, i.e. character, is Dhamma: he is one with a body of Dhamma-qualities, he embodies the Dhamma. The lead-up to this passage is given below as Th.44. In the second passage, in which the compound is a noun, the* arahant*-nun Mahā-pajāpatī, the Buddha's step-mother, speaks to the Buddha.*

Vāseṭṭha, he whose faith in the Tathāgata has taken root and become established, firm, unshakeable by any renunciant, brahmin, god, māra or brahmā or any other person in the world, it is fit for him to say: "I am a legitimate son of the Blessed One, born of his mouth, born of Dhamma, produced by Dhamma, created by Dhamma, inheritor of Dhamma. What is the reason for this? Because, Vāseṭṭha, these are designations of the Tathāgata, 'one whose body (of qualities) is Dhamma (*Dhamma-kāyo*)', 'one whose body (of qualities) is the highest (*brahmā*)', 'become Dhamma', become the highest.'

Aggañña Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya III.84, trans. P.H.

I, Fortunate One, I am your mother; you, O wise one, are my father: Lord, you give the happiness of the good Dhamma, (so) I am born from you, Gotama!

Fortunate One, this body of material form of yours was reared by me. But my flawless dhamma-body (body of good qualities) was reared by you.

Therī-apadāna, section 17, vv. 31–32: *Apadāna* p.532, trans. P.H.

The nature of the Buddha

Is a Buddha simply a human? *Th.5*

The introduction to passage L.38 refers to the 'thirty-two characteristics of a great man', that a Buddha and a universal, 'Wheel-turning' monarch are seen to have. This shows that even the physical body of a Buddha is seen as wondrous, and as being karmically influenced by his perfections built up over many lives. In this striking passage, someone sees one of the thirty-two characteristics of a great man in the Buddha's footprint, and thinks that such a being cannot be human. He then meets the Buddha and asks him whether he might be a god, divine musician, a nature spirit or – a human. The Buddha says he is none of these (and also has no future lives in which he would be any of them) but, standing above the world in which he has developed he is, precisely, a Buddha.

Then Doṇa, following the Blessed One's footprints, saw him sitting at the root of the tree: graceful, inspiring confidence, with peaceful faculties and peaceful mind, having attained the utmost control and tranquillity, (like) a tamed and guarded bull elephant with his senses restrained.

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On seeing him, he went to him and said, 'Sir, could you be a god?' 'No, brahmin, I will[116] not be a god.' 'Could you be a divine musician?' 'No, brahmin, I will not be a divine musician.' 'Could you be a nature spirit? 'No, brahmin, I will not be a nature spirit.' 'Could you be a human being? 'No, brahmin, I will not be a human being.'

'... Then what could you be?' 'Brahmin, the intoxicating inclinations by which – if they were not abandoned – I would be a god: those are abandoned by me, their root destroyed, made like a palm-tree stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. The intoxicating inclinations by which – if they were not abandoned – I would be a divine musician ... a nature spirit ... a human being: those are abandoned by me, their root destroyed, made like a palm-tree stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

Just like a red, blue, or white lotus flower that, though born in the water, grown up in the water, rising up above the water, stands unsoiled by the water, in the same way, though born in the world, grown up in the world, I have overcome the world and live unsoiled by the world. Remember me, brahmin, as a Buddha (awakened one).'

Doṇa Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.37–9, trans. P.H.

The Buddha, his perfections built up in past lives as a *bodhisatta*, and his awakened disciples

Th.6 *Jātaka* stories and the perfections of the *bodhisatta*

Our present Buddha is seen to have met a past Buddha many lives ago, and resolved to become a Buddha like him. He is then seen to have gone on to develop his moral and spiritual qualities in many lives, in which he meets various other past Buddhas. A rich kind of literature dealing with some of the lives of the bodhisatta *(a being dedicated to Buddhahood) who became the historical Buddha consists of the* jātaka *stories. The Pāli Canon* jātaka *section contains 547 of these in verse form, and the commentarial prose expands these into a range of morality tales, which no doubt partly drew on and adapted Indian folk tales. The* Cariyā-piṭaka *(III.15 vv.8–11), or 'Basket of Conduct', is a short text (37 pages) of the Pāli Canon, one of the last to be included. This focuses on certain* jātaka *stories to exemplify the* bodhisatta*'s ten 'perfections' (Pāli* pāramī, *Skt* pāramitā*): generosity, ethical discipline, renunciation, wisdom, vigour, patient acceptance, truthfulness, resolute determination, loving kindness and equanimity. Each of these is said to exist as a perfection, then as a 'higher perfection' (*upapāramī*), then as an 'ultimate perfection' (*paramattha-pāramī; Buddhavaṃsa *I.77). These are seen by some as developed respectively by an* arahant*, a solitary-buddha and a perfect Buddha. The following passage is from a* jātaka *story telling of the* bodhisatta *as Magha, who*

116 The questioner asks using the future tense, but in a polite usage in the sense of 'could you be?'; the Buddha responds negatively, using the same verb, but in its literal sense, relating to possible future lives. However, the Chinese parallel to the passage just use the present tense.

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led others in doing works of benefit to the community, but was then wrongly accused of theft. Being sentenced, with his fellows, to being trampled to death by an elephant, he protected them all by urging them to have loving kindness for the slanderer, the king who had ordered their punishment, and the elephant.

Another time these thirty men were led by the bodhisatta to have the same purpose as himself; he established them in the five ethical precepts, and afterwards used to go about with them doing good deeds. ... With their staves they used to roll out of the way all the stones that lay on the ... roads of the village; they cut down trees that would strike against the axles of chariots; they made rough places smooth; they built causeways and a hall, and dug water-tanks; they practised generosity and kept the precepts. In this way did most of the villagers generally follow the bodhisatta's teachings and kept the precepts.

But the village headman thought, 'When these men used to get drunk and commit murders, etc., I used to make a lot of money out of them, not only on the price of their drinks, but also by the fines and dues they paid. But now there is this young Brahmin Magha bent on getting them to keep the precepts; he is putting a stop to murder and other crime'. And in his anger, he cried, 'I'll make them keep the five precepts!'.

And he went to the king, saying, 'Sire, there is a band of robbers going about sacking villages and committing other bad actions'. When the king heard this, he told the headman to bring the men before him. ... [which he then did, slandering them to the king]. Without any enquiry, the king commanded offhand that they should be trampled to death by an elephant. So they then made them lie down in the king's courtyard and sent for the elephant. But the bodhisatta exhorted them, saying, 'Bear in mind the precepts; cultivate loving kindness equally for the slanderer, the king and the elephant, and your own bodies'.

Then the elephant was brought to trample them to death. But however much he was led, he would not approach them, but fled, trumpeting loudly. Elephant after elephant was brought up, but they all fled like the first. Thinking that the men must have some drug about their persons, the king had them searched, but was told that nothing had been found. 'Then they must be muttering some mantra', said the king, 'ask them whether they have such a mantra'. The question being put to him, the bodhisatta said that they *had* got a mantra. ...so the king had them all summoned to his presence and said 'Tell me your mantra'.

The bodhisatta replied, 'Sire, we have no other s mantra than this: that not a man among the thirty of us kills, takes what is not given, misconducts himself (sexually), or lies; we drink no strong drink; we cultivate loving kindness; we practise generosity; we level roads, dig tanks, and build a public hall: this is our mantra, our protection and our strength'.

Well pleased with them, the king gave them all the wealthy in the slanderer's house, and made him their servant.

Kulāvaka-jātaka: Jātaka I.199-200, trans. P.H.

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Th.7 The Buddha and other *arahants*

Passage L.18 shows that a perfectly awakened Buddha is one who rediscovers the path to liberation when it has been lost. This passage shows that this is the key difference between a perfectly awakened Buddha and other arahants*, his awakened disciples.*

Therein, what is the distinction, the disparity and difference between the Tathāgata, arahant, perfectly awakened Buddha, and a monk liberated by wisdom? ... The Tathāgata, arahant, perfectly awakened Buddha is the one who makes arise the previously unarisen path, the producer of the previously unproduced path, the declarer of the previously undeclared path. He is the knower of, discoverer of and one skilled in the path. And his disciples now dwell following that path and become endowed with it afterwards.

Sambuddha Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya III.66, trans. P.H.

Th.8 A Buddha knows *much* but only teaches what is spiritually useful

This passage suggests that a Buddha also knows much more than other arahants*, but only teaches what helps others attain liberation.*

At one time the Blessed One was staying at Kosambī in a siṃsapā grove. Then the Blessed One, taking a few siṃsapā leaves in his hand, said to the monks: 'What do you think, monks? Which are the more numerous, the few leaves I have here in my hand, or those up in the trees of the grove?'

'Venerable sir, the Blessed One is holding only a few leaves: those up in the trees are far more numerous.'

'In the same way, monks, the things that I have directly known, but not taught to you, are numerous. What I have taught to you is only a little. And why, monks, have I not taught it? Because, monks, it is not related to the goal, it is not fundamental to the holy life, does not conduce to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to higher knowledge, to awakening to nirvana. That is why I have not taught it. And what, monks, have I taught? I have taught: 'This is the painful'; I have taught: 'This is the origin of the painful'; I have taught: 'This is the cessation of the painful'; I have taught: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of the painful.'

Siṃsapā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.437–478, trans. P.H.

Th.9 The nature of arahantship

These passages briefly encapsulate the nature of the arahant *(literally 'worthy one'), one who has used the teachings and practices taught by the Buddha to end all causes of the painful, experienced nirvana, and thus reached the end of all rebirths. They vary in the extent to which they have such powers as knowledge of past rebirths, and their abilities as teachers. (See also Th.205ff).*

'Friend Sāriputta, it is said "arahantship, arahantship". What now is arahantship?' 'The destruction of attachment, the destruction of hate, the destruction of delusion: this, friend is called arahantship.'

Arahantta Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.252, trans. P.H.

Calm is the mind, calm the speech and the action
Of such a one who is tranquil and freed by perfect gnosis.

Dhammapada 96, trans. P.H.

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The status of the Buddha beyond his death

As seen in Th.20, the Buddha refused to answer the 'undetermined' questions: of whether, after death, a Tathāgata *'is', 'is not', 'both is and is not' or 'neither is nor is not'. The word for 'is' here,* hoti, *is often used for asserting identities, such as 'the brahmin is a minister', or as equivalent to 'occurs'; it is about events and identities in time. Now it is clear from the texts that a Buddha or other awakened person is not reborn in any way: one cannot say that such a person 'is' after death in some temporal realm. But nor can one say that he or she completely 'is not', if this is equivalent to saying 'one whose intoxicating inclinations are destroyed (an* arahant*) is annihilated and perishes with the dissolution of the body and is not after death'* (Saṃyutta-nikāya *III.110). The 'both is and is not' rejected possibility probably means that an awakened person exists after death in a state in which only part of their nature is reborn, as in a formless state beyond physicality, and the 'neither is nor is not' one means being in an extremely attenuated state: rebirth in the highest formless state, the sphere of 'neither-perception-nor-non-perception'. Further, those who ask about the fate of a* Tathāgata *after death are seen to wrongly see him as an awakened Self-essence.*

The *Tathāgata* as immeasurable like the ocean *Th.10*

In this passage the wanderer Vaccahagotta asks the Buddha about the fate of an awakened person after death. The Buddha does not accept any of the four proposed possibilities and says that asking which of them applies is like asking which direction an extinguished fire goes in. Given that 'fire' (heat) is seen as one of the component elements of any physical thing, and that one of the rejected options is that an awakened person is annihilated at death, this simile cannot mean that an awakened person totally ends at death. Rather, like a fire without fuel (upādāna)*, such a person has no grasping* (upādāna) *that could lead to any* rebirth. *Even in life, they are seen as 'profound ... hard to fathom as is the great ocean', due to having abandoned any grasping at, and thus identification through, the five kinds of bodily and mental processes making up a person. The* Milindapañha *(p.73), an early post-canonical text, says that the Buddha still 'exists', cannot be located, but can be pointed to by means of the body/collection of Dhamma* (Dhamma-kāya)*', for he taught the Dhamma.*

But, Master Gotama, the monk whose mind is thus liberated, where does he reappear (after death)?' '"Reappear", Vaccha, does not apply.' 'In that case, Master Gotama, he does not reappear.' '"Does not reappear", Vaccha, does not apply.' '... both does and does not reappear.' '... doesn't apply.' '... neither does nor does not reappear.' '... doesn't apply.'

'... At this point, Master Gotama, I am bewildered; at this point, confused. My measure of confidence arising from earlier conversation with Master Gotama has now disappeared.' 'Of course you're bewildered, Vaccha. Of course you're confused. This Dhamma is profound, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, sublime, beyond the scope of mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. For those with other views, other practices, other satisfactions, other aims, other teachers, it is difficult to know. That being the case, I will now put some questions to you. Answer as you see fit.

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What do you think, Vaccha: If a fire were burning in front of you, would you know that, "This fire is burning in front of me"?' '... yes' 'And suppose someone were to ask you, Vaccha, "This fire burning in front of you, dependent on what is it burning?" Thus asked, how would you reply?' '... I would reply, "This fire burning in front of me is burning dependent on grass and timber as its fuel."' 'If the fire burning in front of you were to go out, would you know that, "This fire burning in front of me has gone out"?' '... yes' 'And suppose someone were to ask you, "This fire that has gone out in front of you, in which direction from here has it gone? To the east, the west, the north, or the south?" Thus asked, how would you reply?' 'That doesn't apply, Master Gotama. Any fire burning dependent on a fuel of grass and timber, when that is used up, if it does not get any more fuel, being without sustenance, is reckoned simply as "gone out".'

'Even so, Vaccha, any material form by which one describing the Tathāgata might describe him: that the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palm-tree stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. The Tathāgata is liberated from being reckoned in terms of material form, Vaccha, he is profound, immeasurable, hard to fathom as is the great ocean. "Reappears" does not apply. "Does not reappear" does not apply. "Both does and does not reappear"' does not apply. "Neither reappears nor does not reappear" does not apply. Any feeling ... Any perception ... Any volitional activities ... Any consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: that the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palm-tree stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. The Tathāgata is liberated from being reckoned in terms of feeling, perception, volitional activities or consciousness, Vaccha, he is profound, immeasurable, hard to fathom as is the great ocean.

Aggi-vacchagotta Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.486–488, trans. P.H.

Th.11 Beyond death, an awakened one is beyond words

This passage emphasizes that an awakened one beyond death (not 'after' death, as this still implies existence in time) has passed beyond any way of talking of him.

'He who has gone out ('set' like the sun, or gone to the goal), does he not exist, or is he in a state of eternal well-being? Please give me a good explanation of this, O sage, for this Dhamma is known by you.'

'There exists no measure for one gone to the goal, Upasīva', said the Blessed One. 'That no longer exists for him by which one might speak of him. When all phenomena are removed, all means of speaking are removed.'

Upasīva-māṇavapucchā Sutta: Sutta-nipāta 1075–1076, trans. P.H.

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MAHĀYĀNA

Epithets and qualities of the Buddha

Explanation of the Buddha's epithets *M.1*

This passage interprets the qualities of the Buddha as found in passages such as Th.1.

1. The Tathāgata, from the contemplation of impurity[117] up to the attainment of perfect awakening, and from the stage of preparation, surpassed all disciples and solitary-buddhas. This is why he is known as the 'Unsurpassed One'.

2. The Tathāgata, the Blessed One, taught the cultivation of the meditative concentration of emptiness, the meditative concentration of the cessation of perception and feeling, the four meditative absorptions, the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion, the twelve links of dependent arising, all for the benefit of living beings. What the Buddha has demonstrated is unalterable. This is why he is known as the Tathāgata, 'Thus-gone'. Moreover, the Buddha first proceeded from the stage of preparation and then attained unsurpassed perfect awakening. This is why he is known as the Tathāgata, 'Thus-come'.[118]

3. As he has attained subtle, wondrous, authentic qualities,[119] he is known as an arhant, a 'Worthy One'. Furthermore, as he is worthy to be worshipped by all gods and human beings, he is known as an arhant.

4. As he has awakened to the two kinds of reality, conventional reality and ultimate reality, he is known as a perfectly awakened Buddha.

5. As he has completely perfected his ethical discipline, and as he possesses the three kinds of knowledge, he is known as one who is accomplished in knowledge and conduct.

6. As he will certainly never go to be born again in any form of existence, he is known as the Sugata, 'Well-gone'.[120]

7. As he has complete knowledge of the two worlds, the world of living beings and the physical world, he is called the 'knower of worlds'.

8. As he is well-versed in the skill in means needed to train and discipline living beings, he is known as one who trains people.

9. As he is able to relieve living beings of their fear, and to skilfully teach them the way to freedom from suffering and to blissful pleasure, he is known as the 'teacher of gods and humans'.

10. As he understands all phenomena and all actions, he is known as the Buddha, the Awakened One. Furthermore, as he has defeated four kinds of Māra,[121] he is known as the Bhagavā, the Blessed One.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.16, p.1051b01–b16, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

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117 That is, unlovely aspects of the innards of the body.

118 The compound *Tathāgata* can be interpreted in two ways, either as *Tathā-gata* 'Thus-gone', or as *Tathā-āgata* 'Thus-come'.

119 This phrase can also be interpreted as 'As he has attained the subtle, wondrous, true Dharma'

120 The literal meaning of *sugato*, otherwise translated in this book as 'Fortunate One'.

121 On Māra, see I.1.5 and 7. The four kinds of things which are *māra*, 'deadly', are the five 'categories of existence' (impermanent collections of processes which make up the body and mind), death, a tempter-deity, and defilements such as greed, hatred and delusion.

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M.2 Praise of the Buddha

The following verses are from a hymn of praise to the Buddha by a Mahāyāna poet.

1–2. It is fitting for an intelligent person to go for refuge to the one who is always free of any fault, and who is blessed with every virtue. It is fitting to honour and praise him, and to base oneself on his teaching. ...

27. You did not envy those above you, show contempt for those below you, or compete with your peers. In this way, you became the most excellent in the world.

28. You were devoted to the causes of virtues, not their fruits, and through your perfect practice, all virtues have become firmly established in you. ...

40. You obtained the jewel of the Dharma, and thereby obtained excellence. Through that accomplishment alone you are just like that jewel, and it rests within you. ...

52. Beautiful yet tranquil, brilliant yet not dazzling, powerful yet still, your form is flawless. ...

56. Where else could these wondrous Tathāgata-virtues reside than in your very form with its radiant bodily marks. ...

58. Everyone in this world without exception is bound by the defilements.[122] To liberate the world from its defilements, you forever bound yourself to compassion.

59. What should I praise first? You, or your great compassion, which led you to remain in saṃsāra[123] throughout the ages, though you knew its faults?

60. Though you were naturally inclined towards solitude, your compassion led you to spend time with crowds of people. ...

92. Listening to you brings satisfaction, and seeing you brings calm. Your words bring joy, and your teaching brings emancipation. ...

94. Praising you removes flaws, and recollecting you brings delight. Seeking you brings understanding, and understanding you brings purification. ...

95. Approaching you brings good fortune, and serving you brings great wisdom. Venerating you brings fearlessness, and honouring you is auspicious.

96. Purified by ethical discipline, calmed by meditation, made imperturbable by wisdom, you are a great lake of beneficial karma. ...

98. You are an island for those swept away by floods, protection for the wounded, a refuge for those afraid of being reborn, and a sanctuary for those who long for liberation.

99. For everything that lives, you are worthy of offerings because of your complete purity, a good field because you bear fruit,[124] and a true friend because of the help you give. ...

122 This does not include the Buddhas, who in this context are not considered to be of 'this world'.

123 The round of rebirths; the path to perfect Buddhahood takes many more lives than the path to becoming an *arhant*.

124 A spiritually developed person is seen as a fertile field to 'plant' a gift in, so that it has abundant beneficial karmic fruits.

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113. Exhaustion, the loss of the happiness of tranquillity, the company of fools, the pairs of opposites,[125] and crowds of people, you bear these difficulties as if they were blessings.

114. You strive to benefit the world with a mind free from attachment. What a blessing the Buddha-nature of the Buddhas is. ...

116. You are a powerful protector, enduring disrespect in order to serve others, changing your clothes and adapting your dialect out of love for those who are to be trained. ...

119. You help those who wish to hurt you, more than ordinary people help those who wish to help them.

120. To an enemy intent on harming you, you are a friend intent on helping them. You are devoted to looking for virtues in those who are always looking for faults. ...

124. Through your skill in means, the harsh become gentle, the miserly become munificent, and the cruel become tender. ...

138. You have announced the destruction of the defilements and dispelled Māra's illusions. You have declared the deficiencies of saṃsāra, and pointed out the place free from fear.

139. What more is there to be done for living beings by those with compassion who wish to do good, that you have not already given, out of kindness? ...

142. Out of empathy for the world, you have spread the Dharma on the Earth for a long time. You have trained many good disciples who are able to bring good to the triple world.[126]

143. You have personally trained a great many disciples, the last of whom was Subhadra. What remaining debt do you owe to living beings?

145. 'My physical form and my Dharma-body exist for the sake of others', you said. Even in nirvana, you show this unbelieving world the way.

Śatapañcaśatka-stotra of Mātṛceṭa, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Praise of the infinite good qualities of the *Tathāgata* *M.3*

This passage comes after Queen Śrīmālā receives a letter sent to her by her royal parents, praising the infinite good qualities of the Buddha.

The Queen received the letter with respect and with great joy, read it with interest and memorized it. She then spoke these verses to the messenger, Chandra:

'I have just heard the word "Buddha", a word which had not been heard before in this world. If what is said about him is true, I should serve him and make offerings to him. Buddha, Blessed One, you appear for the sake of all the world. Out of compassion, reveal yourself to me.

As soon as she had spoken these words, the Buddha appeared in the sky just above her, radiating completely pure light, manifesting an inconceivable body.'

Queen Śrīmālā and her retinue bowed down before the Buddha, with their heads at his feet, and praised the great Guide:

125 The pairs of opposites are: gain and loss, fame and infamy, praise and blame, pleasure and pain.

126 That is, the entirety of conditioned existence: see 'three realms' in Glossary.

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'Nothing in the world can compare to the wondrous body of the Tathāgata. It is incomparable, inconceivable. This is why we honour him.

The Tathāgata's form is infinite, as is his wisdom. His Dharma is eternal, and so I go for refuge.

With self-discipline, having subdued the evils of mind, and the four evils of the body,[127] Having reached the stage of the inconceivable, I bow down to you.

You understand all knowable phenomena. Your wisdom body is unobstructed. There are no phenomena which elude you. I bow down to you.

I bow down to the measureless. I bow down to the matchless. I bow down to the self-arisen Dharma. I bow down to the inconceivable.

Protect me, out of compassion, so that the seed of the Dharma may grow in me. On the strength of the good I have done, in this life and the next, may the Buddha always favour me.'

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra ch.1: *sūtra* 48 of *Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Taishō* vol.11, text 353, p.217a16–217b10; cf. text 310, pp.672c24–673a18, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.4 The nature of unsurpassed perfect awakening

This passage portrays the awakening of a Buddha as not an attainment of anything – for it is experienced from a deep letting go of attachment that sees the ungraspability of reality.

'Do you think, Subhūti, that there exists a phenomenon which is the unsurpassed, perfect awakening of the Tathāgata?'

The Venerable Subhūti replied, 'Certainly not, Blessed One. There exists no phenomenon, Blessed One, which is the unsurpassed, perfect awakening of the Tathāgata.'

The Blessed One said, 'Exactly, Subhūti, exactly. Not even the most miniscule of phenomena can be identified or be found to exist.[128] This is how the phrase "unsurpassed, perfect awakening" is used.'

Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, section 22, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The nature of the Buddha

While Theravāda Buddhism sees the historical Buddha as a recently awakened human being, a human-become-the-ultimate, the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna tend to see him as an earthly manifestation of a celestial Buddha who attained awakening countless eons ago, a heavenly being who embodies timeless ultimate reality.

M.5 Alarm at the apparent loss of contact with the Buddha at his death

In this passage, various kinds of spirits and lower divine beings utter a lament at the prospect of the coming parinirvāṇa *of the Buddha: his passing into final nirvana at death.*

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127 Killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and lying.

128 As a substantial, independent entity.

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As we witness the Buddha entering into nirvana, we all sink into an ocean of suffering, overcome with grief and sorrow like a calf which has lost its mother.

We are destitute with no-one to help us, like someone who is oppressed by disease who, because he has no physician to consult, follows his own ideas, and eats things that he should not eat.

Living beings are afflicted by the disease of the defilements, and are constantly harmed by wrong views.

Parted from the Physician of the Dharma, they consume poison instead of medicine. For this reason, may the Buddha, the Blessed One, never abandon us.

Just as people in a country with no king are stricken by famine, we too, are left with no shelter and without the nourishment of the Dharma.

When we now hear that the Buddha is entering into nirvana, our minds become confused and disturbed, like someone who becomes disoriented and loses their bearings during a great earthquake.

When the Great Sage enters into nirvana, the sun of the Buddha will set upon the earth, and the waters of the Dharma will dry up. We will surely die.

When the Tathāgata enters into nirvana, it is as distressing to living beings as it is for the son of a householder to hear that his father and mother have died.

Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 374, ch.3, pp.0375c07–21, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The Buddha did not really disappear when he passed away on earth *M.6*

This passage portrays the real Buddha as remaining unchanged: his passing away is just a misleading appearance.

The Buddha said to Kāśyapa, 'It is like when people do not see the moon appear – they all say "The moon has disappeared", and form a concept of its disappearance. However, the moon by its nature does not really disappear. The moon moves, and appears in another place. The people in that place say "The moon has appeared", yet the moon by its nature does not really appear. Why is this? The moon is not visible because it has been obscured by Mount Sumeru.[129] The moon is always present, it does not appear or disappear. The Tathāgata, the perfectly awakened Buddha is like this. Appearing in the billionfold world-system, he manifested himself in this world as a human being, so that everyone says "He has appeared in this world". He manifested himself there entering into nirvana, but the Tathāgata by his nature does not really enter into nirvana. Nevertheless, living beings all say "the Tathāgata has entered into nirvana". Just as the moon does not really disappear, son of good family, the Tathāgata by his nature does not really appear or disappear. He only manifests his appearance and disappearance in order to train living beings.

It is like this, son of good family. When the moon is full in one place,

129 Seen as a huge mountain at the centre of our world.

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it is seen as a half-moon in another. A half-moon in one place is seen as a full moon in another. When people in this world see the crescent moon, they all say, "It is the first day of the month", and form a concept of a new moon. When they see the full moon, they say, "It is the fifteenth day of the month", and form a concept of a full moon. Nevertheless, the moon by its nature does not really wane or wax. It only appears to wane or wax because of the influence of Mount Sumeru. The Tathāgata's appearance in this world as a newborn baby or the manifestation of his entering into nirvana is just like this. When he appears as a newborn baby, he is just like the new moon on the first day of the month. Everyone says that the infant has just been born. He then appears to walk seven paces, like the moon on the second day. He appears to enter into the realm of learning, like the moon on the third day. He appears to go forth from the household life, like the moon on the eighth day. He appears to emit the great, wondrous light of wisdom, which can destroy Māra's immeasurable armies of defilements in living beings, like the full moon on the fifteenth day. He then displays his own beauty through the thirty-two bodily characteristics[130] and eighty secondary characteristics of a Buddha, and manifests his entrance into nirvana, like the eclipsed moon.

Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 375, p.657a17–b07, cf. *Taishō* vol.12, text 374, p.416a18–c03, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.7 The continuing presence of the Buddha, and his huge life-span

This passage, from the Lotus Sūtra, *has the Buddha declare that his attainment of Buddhahood was not a recent event, but happened countless lives ago, since when he has appeared in our world (and elsewhere), many times, in the form of earthly Buddhas who teach the Dharma and then seemingly disappear into final nirvana. He gives this impression only so that beings do not become lazy, thinking that he is always around to help them, but exert themselves on the path. His real form lies beyond this world, at a heavenly, celestial level.*

Children of good family, listen and I will tell you the kinds of supernormal powers I possess. This entire world, with its gods, human beings, and demi-gods, children of good family, thinks that in the present age, the Blessed One, the Tathāgata Śākyamuni left the Śākya clan, went to the excellent, supreme seat of awakening in the great city known as Gayā, and attained unsurpassed, perfect awakening. You should not see it in this way. Children of good family, I attained unsurpassed, perfect awakening many countless hundreds of thousands of millions of eons ago. ...

Since that time, children of good family, I have taught the Dharma to living beings in this world-system called Earth, and to living beings in countless hundreds of thousands of millions of other world-systems. During this time, children of good family, I have told of the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara,[131] and other Tathāgatas, arhants, perfectly awakened Buddhas. I have told of their final nirvanas, and of the

130 See L.38.

131 A Buddha who lived many eons ago, traditionally seen as the one under which the being who became the historical Buddha started his path towards Buddhahood.

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miraculous creations they produced in order to teach the Dharma by applying skill in means.

Furthermore, children of good family, when living beings come to the Tathāgata, I closely examine the strength of their various faculties, proclaim a name,[132] proclaim that I will attain final nirvana, and then delight them with different kinds of Dharma-teachings. ...

Children of good family, the measure of life I have gained from my previous practice of the bodhisattva path is not yet exhausted.[133] Children of good family, my measure of life will not be exhausted for twice as many countless hundreds of thousands of millions of eons as it has already lasted. Now, children of good family, I will appear to attain final nirvana without attaining final nirvana. Why is this? Children of good family, I do not bring living beings to maturity by remaining for a very long time. If living beings were always able to see me, they would not cultivate wholesome roots, and they would neglect the accumulation of beneficial karma. They would become poor and blind, craving sensual pleasure, and they would remain caught in the net of wrong views. When they saw the Tathāgata, they would be overjoyed, but if the Tathāgata was near at hand, they would not think that it was difficult to see the Tathāgata. They would not make an effort to escape from the triple world,[134] and they would not think that it is difficult to see the Tathāgata.

This is why, children of good family, the Tathāgata has applied skill in means and proclaimed to those living beings, 'It is difficult, monks, to witness the appearance of a Tathāgata'. Why is this? It is because those living beings may or may not see a Tathāgata for countless hundreds of thousands of millions of eons. This, children of good family, is why I say, 'It is difficult, monks, to witness the appearance of a Tathāgata'. When they understand that it is difficult to witness the appearance of a Tathāgata, they will develop an understanding of what is wonderful, and of what is sorrowful. When they do not see the Tathāgata, the arhant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, they will long for the sight of the Tathāgata, and the wholesome roots they will cultivate when their minds become absorbed by the Tathāgata in this way will be to their benefit, advantage, and happiness for a long time. When he sees that they have obtained this benefit, the Tathāgata appears to attain final nirvana without attaining final nirvana, so that living beings will develop the desire to practise.

This, children of good family, is how the Tathāgata teaches the Dharma. The Tathāgata does not speak falsely.

Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra, ch.15, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The *Tathāgata* is the same as the unconditioned *M.8*

This passage proclaims that the Buddha is, like nirvana, unconditioned.

If a son of good family wishes to protect the true Dharma, he should not say that the Tathāgata is the same as the conditioned. He is not the

132 Presumably meaning that he predicts the future Buddhahood of a person, and gives the name by which they will be known as a Buddha.

133 By 'measure of life' here is meant a single lifetime which lasts a very long time, rather than a long series of lives.

134 That is, the entirety of conditioned existence: see 'three realms' in Glossary.

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same as the conditioned. If someone says that he is, he should reflect critically, saying 'I am ignorant, and do not yet possess the eye of wisdom.' The true Dharma of the Tathāgata is inconceivable, and so it is not appropriate to claim that the Tathāgata is conditioned. The Tathāgata is unconditioned. Someone who possesses right view should say that the Tathāgata is unconditioned. Why should he do so? He should do so because the Tathāgata brings forth the excellent Dharma in order to benefit living beings, and because he has compassion for them, just like a poor woman who sacrifices her life in the River Ganges out of love for her son.

Son of good family, a bodhisattva, a protector of the Dharma, should act in this way. He should prefer to give up his life than to claim that the Tathāgata is the same as the conditioned. He should say the Tathāgata is the same as the unconditioned. Because he teaches that the Tathāgata is the same as the unconditioned, he will attain unsurpassed perfect awakening, just as a woman who sacrifices herself for her son attains rebirth in the Brahmā-world. Why is this the case? It is because he protects the Dharma. What does it mean to protect the Dharma? It means to teach that the Tathāgata is the same as the unconditioned. Son of good family, liberation will come naturally to someone like this, even if he does not seek it, just as a woman who sacrifices herself for her son will naturally attain rebirth in the Brahmā-world, even if she does not seek it.

Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra, Taishō vol. 12, text 375, chapter 2, p.613c10-23; cf. *Taishō* vol. 12, text 374, vol.12, p.374a19–28, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

A Buddha's three 'bodies'

Mahāyāna ideas on the nature of a Buddha are systematised in the doctrine of the Tri-kāyas *or 'Three bodies' of a Buddha. The Dharma-body (*Dharma-kāya*) or 'body of (pure) dharmas' (see Th.4), is his ultimate nature, the Enjoyment-body (*Saṃbhoga-kāya*) is his form at a celestial level which advanced* bodhisattvas *are able to perceive, and the Emanation-body (*Nir-māṇa-kāya*) is the form in which he appears in ordinary physical worlds such as our own.*

M.9 The Dharma-body I: *Tathāgatas* do not come or go but are to be seen in their dharma-bodies

*These passages express the idea that the appearance and sound of the Buddha does not show the real Buddha: a Buddha is to be seen in his Dharma-body, which in the first passage may have meant their collection (body) of qualities (*dharmas*) pertaining to the Dharma as spiritual path.*

The bodhisattva, the great being Dharmodgata, said to the bodhisattva, the great being Sadāprarudita, '... Son of good family, a man who was being burned by the summer heat, in the last month of summer, in the middle of the day, might see a mirage quivering in the air. He might run towards it, thinking to himself, "I can see water! I can see water to drink!" Where do you think that water comes from, son of good family, and where do you think it will go? To the great ocean to the east, or to the great oceans to the south, the west, or the north?'

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Sadāprarudita said, 'Son of good family, the water in the mirage does not exist. How can one perceive its coming or its going? That foolish, unwise man, son of good family, who was being burned by the summer heat, saw the mirage and formed a perception of water where there was no water. There was no inherently existing water there.'

Dharmodgata said, 'Exactly, son of good family, exactly. Those who adhere to the physical form or the voice of the Tathāgata, and who form a mental construction of the Tathāgata as coming or going, are just like this. Those who form a mental construction of the Tathāgata as coming or going should all be described as foolish and unwise, just like the man who formed a perception of water where there was no water. Why is this? It is because the Tathāgatas are not to be seen from their physical bodies. The Tathāgatas have Dharma-bodies.'

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Sūtra ch.31, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Those who saw me by my body and followed me by my voice have made the wrong kind of effort. Those people will not see me.

A Buddha should be seen from the Dharma, the Guides have Dharma-bodies. Yet, the nature of the Dharma is not knowable. It cannot be known.

Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, section 26, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The Dharma-body II: The Dharma-body as arising from the qualities of the noble path *M.10*

This passage sees the Dharma-body as arising from the various qualities of the path to Buddhahood.

'The body of the Tathāgata, friends, is the Dharma-body. It arises from generosity, ethical discipline, meditative concentration, wisdom, liberation, and the knowing and seeing of liberation. It arises from loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. It arises from generosity, self-control, and restraint. It arises from patient acceptance and gentleness. It arises from the wholesome roots produced by the steady application of energy. It arises from meditative absorption, emancipation, meditative concentration, and meditative attainment. It arises from learning, wisdom, and skill in means. It arises from the thirty-seven practices which help one to attain awakening.[135] It arises from meditative calm and insight. It arises from the ten powers, from the four kinds of self-confidence, and from the eighteen unique qualities of a Buddha. It arises from all of the perfections. It arises from higher knowledge and direct knowledge. It arises when one rids oneself of all unwholesome qualities. It arises when one develops all wholesome qualities. It arises from truth. It arises from reality. It arises from vigilance.

The body of the Tathāgata, friends, arises from limitless pure karma. This is what you should long for. In order to rid all living beings of the sickness of all the defilements, you should resolve to attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening.'

—

135 These are various sets of spiritual qualities, such as the four applications of mindfulness.

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The Licchavi Vimalakīrti taught the Dharma in this way to those who had gathered to inquire about his illness, and hundreds of thousands of living beings resolved to attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch. 2, sec.12, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.11 The Buddha and advanced *bodhisattvas* manifest in countless forms

The Buddha appears in whatever form will help to bring beings to the Dharma and help them towards liberation.

I manifest myself in many different ways in order to liberate all the different kinds of living beings. I may appear with a male body. I may appear with a female body. I may appear with the body of a god or a nāga.[136] I may appear with the body of a demon. I may appear as a mountain, a forest, a stream, a spring, a river, a lake, a fountain, or a well in order to help people and liberate absolutely all of them. I may appear with the body of Śakra,[137] the King of the Gods. I may appear with the body of Brahmā. I may appear with the body of a king of the entire world. I may appear with the body of a householder. I may appear with the body of the king of a particular country. I may appear with the body of a prime minister. I may appear with the body of an official. I may appear with the body of a monk, a nun, a layman, a laywoman, and so forth. I may appear with the body of a disciple, an arhant, a solitary-buddha, a bodhisattva, and so forth, in order to bring living beings to maturity. I do not only appear with the body of a Buddha.

Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrva-praṇidhāna Sūtra, Taishō vol.13, text 412, ch.2, p.779b18–b26, trans. D.S.

The Buddha-nature

All beings are seen to contain or be a Tathāgata-garbha, *which means the 'embryo' or 'womb' of a* Tathāgata, *meaning that they have within them a radiant potential for Buddhahood. It is seen as radiant and pure but obscured by non-intrinsic defilements, as is the nature of the mind in Th.124. In most cases in this work,* Tathāgata-garbha *is referred to by the loose translation 'Buddha-nature'.*

M.12 The nature of the *Tathāgata-garbha* and its relation to beings

The first passage comes from a key text that seems to have been the first to introduce the idea of the Tathāgata-garbha. *It gives nine similes for how the* Tathāgata-*garbha relates to beings, which trade on the various meanings of* 'garbha'*: womb, embryo, the calyx of a flower that encloses a developing blossom, hidden inner room/sanctuary, the outer husk of a seed or the seed itself, or the interior of anything. The* sūtra *describes itself as given by the Buddha ten years after his awakening, to thousands of accomplished monks and countless* bodhisattvas. *Most of its similes suggest that the* Tathāgata-garbha *is a hidden inner Buddhahood that just needs to be revealed by removing the mental defilements that obscure it, but similes no.3, 6 and 8 suggest it is some-*

136 A serpent-deity.
137 Pāli Sakka.

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thing that needs to develop and mature. Together, these suggest that it is a precious Buddha-potential that needs to be uncovered and then matured.

(1) The Buddha said, 'Children of good family, it can be compared to the countless lotus flowers manifested by the Buddha which withered suddenly, and within which countless Buddhas, adorned with the thirty-two bodily characteristics of a Buddha, were manifested sitting cross-legged. ... In the same way, children of good family, when I look upon all living beings with my Buddha-eye, I see the Tathāgata-wisdom, the Tathāgata-eye and the Tathāgata-body sitting cross-legged and unmoving amongst the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion. Children of good family, although living beings are currently defiled by the defilements, they possess the eternally pure Tathāgata-garbha, with virtues which are indistinguishable from my own.

(2) ... As the pure honey on a cliff or in a tree is surrounded by a cloud of countless bees swarming around it and guarding it, the Tathāgata-garbha is covered and concealed by the defilements. ...

(3) Again, children of good family, it can be compared to grain from which the husks have not been removed. A foolish, unwise, simple, lowly person might discard it, but when it is washed and the husks removed, the kernels can be used. ...

(4) Again, children of good family, it can be compared to a piece of pure gold which has fallen into a pile of waste, and lies concealed there for many years. ...

(5) Again, children of good family, it can be compared to a precious jewel hidden within an impoverished household [whose members are unaware of it]. ...

(6) Again, children of good family, it can be compared to a mango stone, which does not decay when it is buried in the earth, but which grows into a great tree, the king of trees. ...

(7) Again, children of good family, it can be compared to someone who has a statue of pure gold, and who is travelling to another country on dangerous roads, and who fears being attacked and robbed on the way, and who therefore wraps his statue in dirty rags, so that no-one will discover it. Imagine that he died on the way, and that his gold statue was discarded in the wilderness. Travellers trampled it, and it became filthy. ...

(8) Again, children of good family, it can be compared to a poor, ugly, simple-minded woman who bears within her womb an honourable son who will become a noble king, a king of the entire world. This woman, though, does not know what he will become in the future, and thinks of him as a poor, ordinary, low-born child. In the same way, children of good family, the Tathāgata sees all living beings circling through saṃsāra suffering all kinds of pain and poisons, but all possessing within their bodies the precious Tathāgata-garbha. Just like the woman, though, they do not realise what they bear within them. This is why the Tathāgata explains the Dharma to everyone, saying "Children of good family, you are not inferior and lowly. You all possess Buddha-nature in your bodies. If you apply yourselves with vigour and destroy your previous evil deeds, then you will become bodhisattvas and Blessed Ones, and you will transform and rescue countless living beings". ...

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(9) Again, children of good family, it can be compared to a master foundry man casting a statue in pure gold. When the statue has been cast, it is turned upside-down and placed on the ground. Although it is blackened and burnt on the outside, the statue inside is unaffected. When it is opened, and the statue is revealed, its golden colour shines forth. ...

Tathāgata-garbha Sūtra, Taishō vol.16, text 666, p.457b25–c03, c23–c27, p.458a10–a14, a24–a28, b10–b15, b23–b24, b29–c06, c15–21, p.459a07–a14, a25–b02, trans. D.S.

28. ... All embodied beings are always Buddha-garbhas, which have grown from a seed. ...

45. In reality, there is no difference between ordinary people, noble ones, and perfectly awakened Buddhas. Those who have seen things the way they are teach that this Jina-garbha[138] is to be found in living beings. ...

47. It is said to be impure in the sphere of living beings, both pure and impure in bodhisattvas, and completely pure in the Tathāgatas. ...

49. Just as space extends everywhere and has uniformity as its nature, the unblemished element which has the mind as its essential nature pervades everything. ...

155. This element is empty of non-intrinsic characteristics, which are distinct from it.

It is not empty of unsurpassed qualities, which are not distinct from it.

Ratnagotra-vibhāga of Sāramati or Maitreya, ch.1, v.28, 45, 47, 49, 155, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.13 Queen Śrīmālā on the Buddha-nature

*This passage portrays the Buddha-nature (*Tathāgata-garbha*) as that within people which is the basis of the round of rebirths (as it is the root of the mind, which can go astray due to accompanying defilements), but which also sees the need for liberation from this and its pains, and which seeks liberation. It is eternal, and pure, but not an essential, permanent Self.*

Blessed One, saṃsāra is based upon the Buddha-nature, and on account of the Tathāgata it is said to be impossible to know the primordial state. Blessed One, if one says that when the Buddha-nature exists, saṃsāra exists, this is well said. ...

The two phenomena of birth and death, Blessed One, are the Buddha-nature. In worldly terms, birth takes place, and death takes place. When the faculties cease, this is called death. When new faculties arise, this is called birth. The Buddha-nature is not born and does not die. The Buddha-nature is not characterised by anything conditioned. The Buddha-nature is eternal and unchanging. For this reason, the Buddha-nature is the basis, the support, the foundation. Blessed One, it is the qualities of the Buddha, inseparable, unbreakable, indivisible, indestructible, inconceivable. Blessed One, the Buddha-nature is the basis, the support, and the foundation of conditioned things, which are breakable, divisible, destructible, and external.

138 *Jina*, or 'Victorious One' is an epithet of a Buddha.

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Blessed One, if there were no Buddha-nature, there would be neither aversion to what is painful nor joyful striving for nirvana.[139] ...

Blessed One, the Buddha-nature is without origin, an unarisen and unceasing phenomenon. It can experience pain, and can therefore experience aversion to what is painful and joyfully strive for nirvana.

Blessed One, the Buddha-nature is not an essential self, a living being, a life force, or a person. The Buddha-nature is not the sphere of living beings who fall into false views of an essential self, who hold distorted views, and who have a confused understanding of emptiness.

Blessed One, the Buddha-nature is the embryo[140] of the expanse of phenomena, the embryo of the Dharma-body, the supreme supramundane embryo, the embryo which is by nature primordially pure. It is by nature primordially pure, but it is contaminated by non-intrinsic secondary defilements,[141] actual defilements. The sphere of the Tathāgata is inconceivable. Why is this the case? It is because neither momentary wholesome mental states nor momentary unwholesome mind states are contaminated by the defilements.

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 353, ch.13, p.222b05–26; cf. *Taishō* vol. 11, text 310, p.677c07–27, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA

The Buddha-nature

Everybody has the Buddha-nature *V.1*

In the first chapter of his famous and influential 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', relying on Indian scriptural sources, the great Tibetan master Gampopa (1079–1153) argues that the Buddha-nature (see M.12–13) is present in all beings, and that eventually they will all attain the supreme awakening of a Buddha.

We must free ourselves from this delusory saṃsāra[142] and attain unsurpassed awakening. Yet we may wonder whether such lowly beings as ourselves, try as we might, can attain it at all. Well, if we assiduously practise, why could we not attain it? After all, just like all sentient beings, we also have the Buddha-nature - the cause of (attaining) Buddhahood. ...

If that is true, then what is the reason why all sentient beings have the Buddha-nature? It is (1) because all sentient beings are pervaded by the Dharma-body,[143] emptiness;[144] (2) because the ultimate reality

139 The suggestion is that ordinary consciousness is a stream of momentary states, too evanescent to develop these.

140 *Garbha*, which can also mean 'womb' (M.12).

141 Defilements which come and go in the mind, but are not an inherent part of it.

142 *Saṃsāra* is the cycle of birth and death from time without beginning (see Th.55 and V.18). It is 'delusory' because it stems from ignorance or not-knowing of ultimate reality and because it induces delusions (of permanence where there is none, etc.).

143 See M.9–10.

144 The nature of sentient beings is empty of an inherent nature, so they are not ultimately different from the Dharma-body of a Buddha.

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of suchness is indivisible; and (3) because every sentient being is one of the types (of Buddha-nature). It is owing to those three reasons that every sentient being has the Buddha-nature. This is what is said in the *Uttaratantra*, 'Because the perfectly awakened Buddha-body is all-pervading; because "suchness" is indivisible; and because they are of the types; all embodied beings always have the Buddha-nature' (UT VII.28).

The first reason is that all sentient beings are pervaded by the Dharma-body, emptiness. This means that sentient beings have the Buddha-nature because the Buddha is the Dharma-body, the Dharma-body is emptiness, and emptiness pervades all sentient beings. The second is that the ultimate reality of 'suchness' is indivisible. This means that sentient beings have the Buddha-nature also because the 'suchness' of Buddhas is not better, bigger or higher than the 'suchness' of sentient beings. The third is that every sentient being is of one of the types (of Buddha-nature). This means that each sentient being is of one of the five types of Buddha-nature: the 'cut-off type',[145] the uncertain type,[146] the disciple type, the solitary-buddha type, or the Great Vehicle type.[147] ...

There are two types (of Buddha-nature): the awakened and the unawakened type. The awakened type is the fully accomplished fruition (of Buddhahood), which has a perceptible sign. The unawakened type is the fruition not yet accomplished, which has no perceptible sign. One might wonder by what condition the Buddha-nature can be awakened. The answer is that once the unfavourable conditions are removed, and the favourable conditions are available, the Buddha-nature is awakened. Otherwise, the Buddha-nature remains un-awakened. There are four unfavourable conditions: being born in an unfavourable circumstance, lacking the propensity (to practise the Dharma), improper behaviour, and obscuring influences. There are two favourable conditions: the external one is a teacher who teaches the Dharma, and the internal one is a correct attitude and aspiration for the wholesome Dharma. ...

From among the five types (of Buddha-nature), the Great Vehicle type is the close cause of (attaining) Buddhahood. The disciple and solitary-buddha types are distant causes because they will eventually also lead to Buddhahood. The uncertain type can be either a close or a distant cause. The cut-off type – which does not mean that one does not attain Buddhahood at all, just that one needs a very long time to do so – is a very distant cause. Therefore, because all sentient beings belong to one of those five types, every sentient being has the Buddha-nature.

Thus, owing to the three reasons (explained above), it is taught that every sentient being has the Buddha-nature. How can it be illustrated? It inheres in us like silver in ore, sesame oil in sesame seed, or butter in milk. Therefore, just as ore can be turned into silver, sesame into oil, and milk into butter, all sentient beings can turn into Buddhas.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.6–8, 13–16, trans. T.A.

145 The 'cut-off' (Skt *icchantika*) type is temporarily cut off (or disconnected) from their Buddha-nature (see below).

146 The uncertain type can become any of the remaining three types depending on the conditions.

147 On these, see 'Lesser Vehicle' in Glossary.

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A Buddha's three 'bodies'

In the Vajrayāna, the three 'bodies' of a Buddha (see M.9–11) are seen as accessible within, in different aspects of the mind.

The three Buddha-bodies as the nature of mind V.2

This passage introduces the three Buddha-bodies from the Great Completion (Dzogchen)[148] *perspective, which points to the presence of the three Buddha-bodies in the nature of mind or 'knowing' (Tibetan* rig pa*) as the three facets or 'dimensions' of non-dual experience.*[149] *The triad in this context is defined as the essence, nature and compassion of* knowing, *and is likened to the empty-luminous reflexivity of a mirror. The passage is taken from 'The Flight of the Garuda' (FG) by Lama Zhabkar (1781–1850).*

EMAHO[150]

And now, dear sons, listen.[151]

The three bodies of the Buddha: essence, nature and compassion – as well as the five bodies (of enjoyment) or the five types of knowledge[152] – are all complete in this inherently knowing and self-illuminating present. The essence of knowing, its emptiness in the sense of having no colour, shape or any other attributes, is the Dharma-body. The luminous self-expression of that emptiness is the Enjoyment-body. And the ceaseless display of variety is the Emanation-body.[153]

The three bodies of the Buddha are illustrated by the mirror simile. The crystal mirror illustrates the Dharma-body, its clear luminosity exemplifies the Enjoyment-body, and its unceasing display of images is similar to the Emanation-body. If beings could only recognize the three bodies of the Buddha as innate in their own minds, they would immediately become Buddhas themselves, without having to practise even a bit of meditation. Though I have introduced the three Buddha-bodies one by one, they are actually one and the same expanse,[154] so do not get confused by taking them to be different, dear sons!

Know the three Buddha-bodies as utter emptiness pure from the first, a single entity that is the unity of luminosity and emptiness, and always remaining in that state without grasping. Know that the triad of essence, nature, and compassion corresponds to the Dharma-, Enjoyment-, and Emanation-bodies respectively, and knowing those three as

148 According to Tibetan Buddhism, *Dzogchen* is the natural, primordial state of being, as well as a body of teachings and meditation practices aimed at realizing that state. It is a central teaching of the Nyingmapa school, and is also practised by adherents of other Tibetan Buddhist schools.

149 Thus, the term 'knowing' (*rig pa*) refers to non-dual knowledge in which there is no difference or separation between the subject (mind) and the object of perception.

150 An expression of wonderment in the Dzogchen tradition

151 This teaching is number 7 in a sequence of twenty-three instructional 'songs' addressed to his disciples, whom he considers his spiritual 'sons'.

152 See next passage, V.3.

153 On the three bodies of a Buddha, see introduction above M.9.

154 This term can be taken as shorthand for the 'expanse of phenomena', but in the Mahāyāna tradition it is also a synonym for Buddha-nature.

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the full unity of luminosity and emptiness, conduct yourself in that state without grasping!

'The Flight of the Garuda', pp.171–72, trans. T.A.

The five Buddha families

The five Buddha 'families' consist of the five Enjoyment-body Buddhas as family heads ('fathers'), their female Buddha consorts ('mothers'), several bodhisattvas *seen as their spiritual descendants ('sons and daughters'), and several other minor figures. In the Vajrayāna, though they are depicted as external transcendental deities, they are understood as aspects of one's own nature.*

V.3 The five Enjoyment-body Buddhas as the five types of knowledge

In the continuation of the previous passage, Zhabkar introduces the idea of the five Enjoyment-body Buddhas (see section introduction before M.9) as the five types of knowledge inherent in knowing. The individual Buddhas' names are explained and are described as the 'expressive powers' of knowledge, which are then defined. Direct awareness of the awakened potential present within the mind's knowing nature can bring swift attainment of awakening.

Furthermore, since this wisdom of self-arising knowledge appears in all kinds of forms, it is the body of Vairocana ('Illuminator'). Being changeless, it is the body of Akṣobhya ('Unshakeable'). Without centre or boundaries, it is the body of Amitābha ('Infinite Light'). Being like a jewel that brings about all supreme and ordinary accomplishments it is the body of Ratnasambhava ('Source of Jewels'). And since it accomplishes everything, it is the body of Amoghasiddhi ('Action Accomplishment'). They do not exist apart from the expressive power of knowing.

Since the knowing of knowledge is essentially ceaseless, manifest luminosity, it is mirror-like knowledge. Since it is pervasive, it is the knowledge of sameness. Since variety arises from its expressive power, it is discrimination. Since it accomplishes everything, it is knowledge of action-accomplishment. And since all types of knowledge belong to the primordially pure essence (of knowing), it is knowledge of the expanse of phenomena. These types of knowledge do not exist at all apart from the expressive power of knowing.

If I were to show you directly the three bodies of a Buddha – the essence, nature and compassion, and the five bodies of enjoyment or the five types of knowledge – by pointing a direct finger at them, then they are here in this unmade and uncontrived present moment of knowing, unaffected by circumstance, untainted by grasping. They are right here in this clear and awake moment of knowing; this is where all Buddhas of the past arose from, all Buddhas of the present come from, and all Buddhas of the future will arise from. This is the mind of the Buddhas of the three times, so never part from it, my fortunate ones!

'The Flight of the Garuda', p.172, trans. T.A.

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A prayer to the five Buddha-families from the 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' *V.4*

This passage, taken from the famous 'Tibetan Book of the Dead', introduces the five Enjoyment-body Buddhas, together with their 'families', as transcendent realities to be met with after one's death. It is a prayer to the 'fathers' and 'mothers' of the families – who can be realized to be one's own nature – to rescue the deceased from the abyss of the 'dreadful bardo*', the intermediate state between death and birth.*[155] *Each of the five Buddha families is envisaged as presenting a path of knowledge to their respective Buddha-land where one can swiftly attain liberation and awakening. One's Buddha family will be determined by one's dominant defilement/affliction, considered as a distorted manifestation of the type of knowledge represented by the Enjoyment-body Buddha who is the head of that family.*

Prayer for Liberation from the Abyss of the Intermediate State
Homage to the Guru and the Hosts of Sky-Dancers![156]
Please guide me on my path by your immense love!
Should I wander in saṃsāra owing to confusion,
May I be guided by heroes and knowledge-holders,[157]
Onto the luminous path of co-emergent knowledge,[158]
May I be supported by the supreme mother sky-dancers;
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!
Should I wander in saṃsāra due to strong delusion,
May I be guided by the Buddha Vairocana
Onto the luminous path of the expanse of phenomena knowledge,
May I be supported by the supreme mother Ākāśadhātvīśvarī,[159]
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!
Should I wander in saṃsāra due to fierce aggression,
May I be guided by the Buddha Vajrasattva[160]
Onto the luminous path of mirror-like knowledge,
May I be supported by the supreme mother Buddhalocanā,[161]
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!
Should I wander in saṃsāra due to intense pride,
May I be guided by the Buddha Ratnasambhava,
Onto the luminous path of the knowledge of sameness,

155 The intermediate state is said to be an 'abyss' because of the sense of loss – similar to the loss of solid ground from under one's feet – and disorientation. Beings are said to be tossed about by the 'winds of karma', i.e. the force of their karmic actions, which can sometimes be 'dreadful'.

156 The guru is the tantric preceptor and a 'sky-dancer' (*ḍākinī*) is a female portrayal of enlightened wisdom energy in the Tantric tradition. For example, the five 'Buddha-mothers' – consorts of the five 'Buddha-fathers' – embody the pure energy of the five material elements.

157 The 'heroes' are male companions or counterparts of the female sky-dancers, and 'knowledge-holders' are masters of the Tantric teaching.

158 The non-dual knowledge inherent in every moment of experience.

159 'Sovereign Lady of the Space Element'

160 'Diamond-being', here another name for Akṣobhya, the 'Unshakeable'.

161 'Buddha-eye' who personifies the pure nature of the earth element.

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May I be supported by the supreme mother Māmakī,[162]
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!
Should I wander in saṃsāra due to strong attachment,
May I be guided by the Buddha Amitābha
Onto the luminous path of discriminating knowledge,
May I be supported by the supreme mother Pāṇḍaravāsinī,[163]
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!
Should I wander in saṃsāra due to forceful envy,
May I be guided by the Buddha Amoghasiddhi
Onto the luminous path of action-accomplishing knowledge,
May I be supported by the supreme mother Samayatārā,[164]
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!
Should I wander in saṃsāra due to the five poisons,[165]
May I be guided by the five Buddha fathers,
Onto the luminous path of the four kinds of knowledge combined,[166]
May I be supported by the five supreme mothers;
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!
Should I wander in saṃsāra due to forceful habits,
May I be guided by the peaceful and wrathful[167] Buddhas
Onto the luminous path of frightful and terrifying visions,
May I be supported by the supreme wrathful mothers;
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!
Should I wander in saṃsāra due to deep confusion,
May I be guided by the heroes and knowledge-holders,
Onto the luminous path of co-emergent knowledge,
May I be supported by the supreme mother sky-dancers;
May they rescue me from the abyss of the dreadful bardo
And escort me to the ground of a truly complete Buddha!

'The Tibetan Book of the Dead', pp.185–191, trans. T.A.

162 Māmakī (translation unknown) personifies the water element.
163 'She in White Clothes' is the pure essence of the fire element.
164 'Committed Saviouress', who embodies the pure nature of the wind or air element.
165 The five defilements (or mental poisons) mentioned in the previous verses: delusion, aggression, pride, attachment, and envy.
166 The five types of knowledge with the exception of the last one, action accomplishing knowledge.
167 'Wrathful Buddhas' are dynamic manifestations of the peaceful Enjoyment-body Buddhas representing the power of transforming the five poisons into their respective types of knowledge.

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The Buddha within

The inner *maṇḍala* of the five enjoyment-body Buddhas V.5

In contrast, this passage from 'The Flight of the Garuda' treats the five Enjoyment-body Buddhas as immanent realities, different aspects of knowledge all included in the 'inner maṇḍala*' of knowing. Furthermore, it identifies them as the inherent purity of the five defilements.*[168]

EMAHO!
Now again, fortunate ones, listen to the song of this renunciant!
Vairocana is not outside, he is within.
The real Buddha Vairocana is the nature of the mind,
The expanse of phenomena free from conceptual obsession,
And the very essence of delusion – pure as it stands.
Vajrasattva is not outside, he is within.
The real Buddha Vajrasattva is the mirror,
The unceasing display of the mind's expressive power,
And the very essence of aggression – pure as it stands.
Ratnasambhava is not outside; he is within.
The real Buddha Ratnasambhava is sameness,
With nothing to adopt or reject, prove or refute,
And the very essence of pride – pure as it stands.
Amitābha is not outside, he is within.
The real Buddha Amitābha is discrimination,
Immersed in the expanse of empty pleasure,
And the very essence of attachment – pure as it stands.
Amoghasiddhi is not outside, he is within.
The real Buddha Amoghasiddhi is activity-accomplishment,
The self-liberating immediacy of knowledge,
And the very essence of envy – pure as it stands.

'The Flight of the Garuda', p.196, trans. T.A.

The Ādibuddha Samantabhadra's Prayer V.6

The Ādibuddha is a key concept in Vajrayāna Buddhism. He is the first, original Buddha, who has been awakened since the very beginning of time.[169] *He is known by different names in the different schools, but in the Old School (Nyingmapa) of Tibetan Buddhism he is called 'Samantabhadra', 'All-good'. The passage below is part of a larger Tantric text dealing with Samantabhadra (*'Tantra *Showing the Transparency of the Samantabhadra's Buddha Mind'), and bears the subtitle: 'A Prayer of Great Efficiency which cannot fail to make*

168 This particular teaching in the Dzogchen tradition claims that the five types of knowledge are the obscured pure inner nature of the defilements, though the natural purity of their energy is realized in meditation only. The way of meditating on the nature of the defilements without applying any 'antidote' (called 'purification of the expressive powers of knowing') is described in Song 13 of the 'The Flight of the Garuda', for example. Also, see next passage, V.6.

169 Even though *saṃsāra* has no beginning in terms of linear time, Vajrayāna still conceives of an atemporal 'beginning' that is ever-present.

170 For more details and a full explanation of Samantabhadra's Prayer, see FG 139–153.

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all sentient beings attain Buddhahood'.[170] *Rather than an omnipotent, universal creator, Samantabhadra represents the fundamental nature of the mind that is the 'basis' of all phenomena of* saṃsāra *and nirvana. His prayer for the liberation and awakening of all sentient beings is a skilful means to make them realize their ultimate identity with him. In the first part of the prayer, he describes the process through which sentient beings strayed into the ways of* saṃsāra*; while he remained a Buddha. He also describes how he has kept taming sentient beings through manifesting countless emanations. In the second part, he describes the dynamics of five of the six spheres of rebirth in terms of their dominant defilement, and while ostensibly praying for sentient beings' liberation he describes a method of meditation whereby frozen states of mind are released into the great 'expanse of phenomena', letting the light of 'knowing' arise.*

HO! The worlds and inhabitants of saṃsāra and nirvana rest on the same basis – yet they are two different ways leading to two different results: one is the magical display of not-knowing, the other that of knowing. Through Samantabhadra's prayer, may they all manifest perfectly awakened Buddhahood in the palace of the expanse of phenomena!

The all-inclusive basis is an unconditioned, self-emerging, infinite space that is inexpressible, not to be called either saṃsāra or nirvana. If you know it, you are a Buddha – if you do not, you are a sentient being circling in saṃsāra. May all sentient beings throughout the three realms[171] of existence get to know that inexpressible basis!

I, Samantabhadra, also have self-emerging knowledge of that very basis – uncaused, unconditioned. Neither external nor internal, neither reified nor denied, it is untainted by the dark shadow of oblivion. Therefore, my vision is unblemished.

Living in the state of intrinsic knowledge there is no panic even though the three worlds might collapse; there is no attachment to the five (sense) objects of desire. In non-conceptual, self-emerging knowledge there are neither material objects nor any of the five poisoning emotions.[172]

The unceasing luminosity of knowing is the single source of the five types of knowledge.[173] From the five types of knowledge fully developed, the five families of the primal Buddha[174] appear. Then, as knowledge develops even further, forty-two Buddhas[175] arise; and as the expressive power of the five types is awakened, sixty blood-drinkers[176] come into being. That is why knowing of the basis has never been deluded.

—

171 That is, all levels of existence, from the lowest hell to the most refined heaven: see 'three realms' in Glossary.

172 The same as the five defilements, they are listed below as the dominant defilements of each of the spheres of rebirth.

173 See V.3.

174 The families of the five Enjoyment-body Buddhas (see V.3) as emanations of Samantabhadra.

175 The forty-two peaceful Enjoyment-body Buddhas who also appear in the post-mortem visions descibed in the 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead'.

176 The so-called 'wrathful deities' (*herukas*) represent the dynamic powers of the mind which ordinarily manifest as anger, agression (and the like) but can be transformed through the path of *tantra* into enlightened energies. They are also well known from the 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' (see last footnote to V.4)

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Since I am the primordial Buddha, I pray that all sentient beings circling in the three realms may recognize this self-emerging knowing, and develop all knowledge. My emanations being unceasing, I send forth inconceivable millions (of Buddhas) to give them various teachings, whatever tames their minds. Through my compassionate prayer, may all sentient beings circling in the three realms be liberated from the six spheres of rebirth!

In the beginning, sentient beings got confused. Failing to intuit the basis, they fell into stupefied oblivion – that is not-knowing (ignorance), the source of all confusion. Suddenly, they fell unconscious, and panicking, their minds started jumping all over the place. That is how they gave rise to the concepts of 'self' and 'the other', the enemy.

As their habitual patterns gradually developed, they entered the ways of saṃsāra. The five poisonous defilements kept increasing, and an incessant stream of the five poisonous actions ensued. Therefore, not knowing – or oblivion – being the first cause of their confusion, I – the Buddha – pray that they automatically recognize their own knowing.

Innate not-knowing is distracted, oblivious consciousness; conceptual not-knowing is dualistic perception of self and other. Innate and conceptual not-knowing are the two fundamental reasons why sentient beings are constantly deluded. I – the Buddha – pray that all sentient beings circling in saṃsāra may wake up from the thick darkness of oblivion, be purified from dualistic perception, and recognize intrinsic knowing.

The dualistic mind, always in doubt, faintly starts clinging (to a false sense of identity), and then gradually builds up dense habit patterns. Getting attached to food, possessions, clothes, places, partners; the five sense objects and loving companions, it is tormented by desire for pleasure. Those (desires) are worldly delusions – dualistic action (karma) is inexhaustible. When the fruit of clinging ripens, one is born as a hungry ghost anguished by intense yearning, in the terrible pangs of hunger and thirst. I – the Buddha – pray that sentient beings with clinging attachment may neither repress their burning desire, nor pursue their objects of attachment; may they just release their minds in the natural state,[177] and when they have contacted their intrinsic knowing, may they attain the knowledge of (correct) discrimination.

The mind subtly stirred up by fear of external appearances builds up habit patterns of aversion, which then give rise to enmity, aggression, and massacre. When the fruit of bitter hatred ripens, one goes through the scorching pains of hell. I – the Buddha – pray that whenever any sentient being in the six places of rebirth experiences intense aversion, may they release it without repressing or pursuing it; and when they have contacted their natural state of knowing, may they attain the knowledge of clarity.[178]

When the mind becomes arrogant it starts challenging and putting

177 According to the tradition of the Great Completion (*Dzogchen*), the natural state of mind is the same as the mind of Samantabhadra. Awareness of mental defilements without either repressing or expressing them is also found in as one aspect of Theravāda mindfulness practice (see Th.138, under mindfulness of reality-patterns).

178 Also known as 'mirror-like' knowledge (see V.3).

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down others; and then, building up a habit of extreme self-conceit, it goes through the pain of constant fighting. When the fruit of that karma ripens, one is born as a god who is destined to fall. I – the Buddha – pray that when beings' minds are puffed up, may they release that feeling in the natural state, and when they have re-contacted their intrinsic knowing, may they realize the fact of sameness.

The anguish of self-aggrandizement and disparaging others through dense habit patterns of dualistic perception grows into fierce competition and rivalry, which leads to birth as a cutthroat demi-god who is finally destined to fall into hell. I – the Buddha – pray that those in the throes of envy and competition may release their enmity rather than grasp at it; and when they have re-contacted their intrinsic knowing, may they attain the knowledge of unhindered Buddha-activity.[179]

Dull-headedness, stupidity, forgetfulness, torpor, sloth, and bewilderment – all resulting from being lost in indifferent oblivion – lead to rebirth as a helpless animal. I – the Buddha – pray that the clear light of awareness may dawn in the murky minds of dull sentient beings, and (when they have contacted their intrinsic knowing) may they attain knowledge free of thought.[180]

Each and every sentient being in the three realms are equal to me, the Buddha, the all-inclusive basis; but while they have sunk into an oblivious, deluded state of mind and are presently engaged in meaningless activities – the six types of action (karma)[181] which are like delusory dreams – I have remained Buddha from the first in order to tame the six types of beings through my emanations. I – the Buddha – pray that all sentient beings without exception may become a Buddha in the Dharma-realm.

'*Tantra* Showing the Transparency of the Samantabhadra's Buddha Mind', 1: 535–541, trans. T.A.

179 Also knowns as the knowledge of action-accomplishment (see V.3).

180 Also known as the knowledge of the 'expanse of phenomena' (see V.3).

181 The sixth type, human karma (or action leading to rebirth in the human realm) has not been described separately in the prayer.

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PART II

THE DHAMMA/DHARMA



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On the previous page:
A Tibetan Dharma-wheel (see pp.12, 18, 35, 74–7).

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CHAPTER 3

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHINGS

THERAVĀDA

The overall nature of the Dhamma

'Dhamma' (Pāli, Skt Dharma*) is a word with many layers of meaning. As the second of the three focuses of Buddhist devotion (the 'Three Refuges': see Th.93), where it is used in the singular, Dhamma means: the Buddha's teachings; the realities and principles that these point to as a kind of 'Basic Pattern' to things; the path to liberation from suffering that is the main focus of the teachings, and which accords with the nature of reality; and the final culmination of the path, nirvana.*

Dhamma can also mean something like 'virtue', 'justice', 'the right and proper way', as when a king is said to rule according to Dhamma, i.e. righteously, ethically. As a term used in the plural, dhamma/dharma *can mean: any mental quality, state or thing - its broadest use; an object, real or imaginary, of the mind sense; a principle, truth or reality-pattern (e.g. the four Truths of the Noble Ones (see L.27 and near the end of Th.138).*

Qualities of the Dhamma *Th.12*

The first paragraph of this passage is part of a text that is frequently chanted in Pāli in devotional settings, as well as being reflected on in devotional meditations.

'Master Gotama, ... In what way is Dhamma directly visible (as to is truth and reality), not delayed (in its results), inviting investigation, applicable and onward leading, to be individually understood by the wise?'

'Brahmin, one excited by attachment, overcome by attachment ... wills in a manner leading to the affliction of himself, others and both, and he experiences mental pain and unhappiness. But when attachment is abandoned, and he does not will in a manner leading to the affliction of himself, others and both, he does not experience mental pain and unhappiness. It is in this way that Dhamma is directly visible [The same is then repeated regarding being affected or free of hate or delusion. The next but one *sutta* then says just the same, except for replacing 'Dhamma' with 'nirvana'.]

Aññatara Brāhmana and *Nibbāna Suttas: Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.156–157, trans. P.H.

Dhamma as profound *Th.13*

In this passage, the Buddha reflects on the profound Dhamma he had experienced at his awakening. He then explains this as two-fold: the process of dependent arising (see passages Th.156–168), i.e. a sequence of conditions leading to rebirth and the continuation of what is painful, and nirvana as

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the stopping of all such conditions. Unlike nirvana, conditionality is not something one takes refuge in, but understanding it is part of the Dhamma as path.

This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful, sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. But this population delights in clinging (especially to what is the familiar), enjoys clinging, and rejoices in clinging. It is hard for such a population to see this state, namely, specific conditionality, dependent arising. And it is hard to see this state, namely, the stilling of all volitional constructions, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, non-attachment, cessation, nirvana.

Ariya-pariyesana Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.167, trans. P.H.

Reasons for choosing to practise Buddhism

Th.14 The purpose of the holy life

Monks, this holy life is not lived to deceive people, for prattling with people, for the benefit of gain, hospitality and praise, to defend one's theory, not with the thought 'Let people know about me'. Monks, the holy life is lived for the purpose of restraint, relinquishment, non-attachment and cessation (of suffering).

Uruvela-vagga Brahmacariya Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.26, trans. P.D.P.

Attitude to other spiritual traditions

Th.15 The Dhamma is not for converting others but to help them be better people

In this passage, the Buddha speaks to a non-Buddhist wandering ascetic and emphasizes that he wants to help people progress morally and spiritually and not, as such, to gain disciples.[182]

Nigrodha, you may think: 'The renunciant Gotama says this in order to get pupils.' But you should not regard it like that. Let him who is your teacher remain your teacher. Or you may think: 'He wants us to depart from our instructions.' ... 'He wants to establish us in those things that are unwholesome and reckoned as unwholesome according to our teachers.' ... 'He wants to draw us away from things that are wholesome and reckoned as wholesome according to our teachers.' But you should not regard it like that. Let whatever is wholesome and

182 Buddhist's respect for other religions is shown in the following passage, from a very famous Indian Buddhist emperor, Asoka (Pāli, Skt Aśoka, c. 268–239 BCE): 'if there is cause for criticism (of another religion), it should be done in a mild way. But it is better to honor other religions for this reason. By so doing, one's own religion benefits, and so do other religions, while doing otherwise harms one's own religion and the religions of others. ... One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others.' (Twelfth Rock edict of Asoka: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, Wheel booklet no.386, Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, trans. Ven. Th. Dhammika, ©: http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/dhammika/wheel386.html

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reckoned as wholesome according to your teachers remain the same. Nigrodha, I do not speak for any of these reasons.

There are Nigrodha, unwholesome things that have not been abandoned, defiling, conducive to rebirth, distressful, productive of painful results, associated with future birth decay and death. It is for the abandonment of these things that I expound the teaching. If you practise accordingly, the defiling things will be abandoned, and the things that make for purification will grow, and you will attain to and dwell, in this very life, in the fullness of insight and perfection, having realized it directly by your own higher knowledge.'

Udumbarika-sīhanāda Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya III.56–57, trans. P.D.P.

Disputes and tolerance

The Buddha's advice to his disciples on how to respond to criticisms and accusations *Th.16*

This passage counsels calm assessment of any criticism or praise directed at the Buddha, Dhamma or Sangha (Buddhist community).

'Monks, if others should speak in dispraise of me, of the Dhamma, or of the Sangha, you should not then either bear malice, or become unhappy, or feel depressed in mind. If you then feel angry and displeased, it would be a danger to you yourself. If others speak in dispraise of me, of the Dhamma, or of the Sangha, and you then feel angry, and displeased, would you be able to know whether what others have spoken has been well-spoken or ill-spoken?' 'That would not be so, sir.' 'But when others speak in dispraise of me, or of the Dhamma, or of the Sangha, you should unravel what is contrary to fact as contrary to fact, pointing out "it is not in accordance with fact, it is not like that, this (fault) is not found in us".

Monks, if others should speak in praise of me, in praise of the Dhamma in praise of the Sangha, then you should not feel delighted, happy, or elated in mind ... That would be damaging to you yourself. When others speak in praise of me, or of the Dhamma, or of the Sangha, you should acknowledge what is factual as factual, saying, "this is in accordance with fact, it is like this, this (quality) is found in us".'

Brahma-jāla Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.2–3, trans. P.D.P.

The causal origin of disputes *Th.17*

In this passage, the Buddha says that he disputes with no-one (cf. M.19), and that disputes arise due to fixed concepts that arise from how one mentally processes and elaborates on what one perceives.

The Sakyan Daṇḍapāṇi ... approached ... where the Blessed One was seated, exchanged friendly greetings, and stood on one side leaning on a stick. He said thus: 'What theory does the renunciant hold, and what does he expound?'

'The theory I hold is such that in the case of a brahmin[183] (like myself) living without being fettered by sensual desires, free from per-

183 In the sense of a spiritually perfected person and not in the traditional sense of a member of an hereditary social class.

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plexity, with worry cut off, craving for various kinds of existence abandoned, and for whom conceptions[184] do not lie latent, he stays without disputing with anyone in this world consisting of gods, māras, brahmās, renunciants, brahmins, deities and humans. Brother, I hold such a theory and so do I expound.'

When this was said, the Sakyan Daṇḍapāṇi shook his head, put out his tongue, and showing (creases like) three forks on his forehead, went away leaning on his stick. ...

... [Later the Buddha reported this conversation to some of his monks.] Then a certain monk said to the Blessed One: 'Holding what theory does the Blessed One stay without disputing with anyone in this world consisting of gods, māras, brahmās ... and how sir, is it that conceptions do not lie latent in the Blessed One who is living without being fettered by sensual desires ...?'

The Blessed One said: 'Monk, on whatever account reckonings in terms of conceptual obsession[185] overwhelm a person, if (for him) there is nothing in it to delight in, nothing to welcome, nothing to cleave to, then that itself is the end of latent tendencies to attachment, aversion, dogmatic beliefs, doubt, conceit, to attachment to ways of being, ignorance, the end of the latent tendency to take up sticks and weapons, to fights, quarrels, disputes, accusations, slanders and lies. Here, all these evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.'

The Blessed One said this, and getting up from the seat entered the monastery. Soon after the Blessed One had gone to the monastery it occurred to those monks, 'The Blessed One pointed out the teaching in brief to us and left without explaining its meaning in detail ... Venerable Mahā-kaccāna is capable of explaining it to us in detail.' Then the monks approached Venerable Mahā-kaccāna and requested him: 'Venerable Mahā-kaccāna, please explain it.'

Venerable Mahā-kaccāna explained as follows: 'Friends, on account of eye and visible forms, arises visual consciousness. The coming together of the three is (sensory) contact. On account of contact, feeling arises. What one feels is conceptualized and what is conceptualized is thought about. Regarding what is thought about, one engages in obsessive proliferation of thought. On account of that, reckoning in terms of conceptual obsession overwhelms a person in respect of past, future and present forms discernible by the visual sense. [The same is then repeated regarding the interaction that takes place between the other sense faculties and their corresponding stimuli; this includes the mind and mental objects.]'

Madhupiṇḍika Sutta: *Majjhima-nikāya* I.108–112, trans. P.D.P.

184 *Saññā:* perceptual labels or interpretations.

185 'Reckoning in terms of conceptual obsession' is used as a rendering of *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*. *Papañca* is a term having great psychological import in Buddhism, standing for the proliferation of thought, a frothed-up elaboration that assails a person when they get caught up in a web of emotion and conceptual thought based on sense perception and feelings arising from this.

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How quarrels arise *Th.18*

This passage emphasizes how clinging to possessions leads to quarrels.

Now, in this case Ānanda, craving is dependent on feeling, seeking is dependent on craving, gain is dependent on seeking, deciding (what to do with what has been gained) is dependent on gain, desire and attachment is dependent on deciding, excessive attachment is dependent on desire and attachment, acquisitiveness is dependent on excessive attachment, miserliness is dependent on acquisitiveness, protectiveness is dependent on miserliness, and because of protectiveness various evil unwholesome phenomena come into being such as the taking up of sticks and sharp weapons, fights, quarrels, disputes, accusations, slanders and lies.

Mahā-nidāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.59, trans. P.D.P.

Dogmatic clinging to views as a source of disputes *Th.19*

The following verses come from four discourses from a section of the Sutta-nipāta *called the* Aṭṭhaka-vagga. *This section is a very early Buddhist text, as shown by its being quoted in several other early texts. It particularly emphasizes non-attachment to views and opinions.*

Some speak with an evil mind while others speak intent on truth. A sage does not enter into a dispute that has arisen. Therefore, nowhere has he an obstruction.

How could someone go beyond a dogmatic view[186] of his own that he has entered into with desire and preference? He would speak according to his understanding.

For whomsoever there are dogmatic views esteemed but impure, reached by speculation and so constructed, whatever he sees as advantageous to himself, clinging to it, there is (to him) a calm dependent on what is unstable.

To the purified one, no views based on speculation are to be found with regard to different forms of existence. Having abandoned both hypocrisy and pride, by what would he be led (into the cycle of rebirth)? For, unattached is he.

One who is attached enters into disputes regarding theories. Why and on account of what would one assert (a theory) when one is unattached? He has nothing taken up or laid down. Here itself he has purified all dogmatic views. ...

They say: 'Only this is pure, there is no purity in other doctrines.' Speaking about the excellence of whatever they are attached to, they are separately established in individual truths.[187]

Having plunged into a crowd desiring a dispute, they call one another fools. They engage in contentious talk clinging to different opinions, being desirous of praise, calling themselves skilled people. ...

186 The Pāli term *diṭṭhi* is here translated as 'dogmatic view'. The Buddha used this term to refer to all speculative views known during his time. They are presented as sixty-two in all (or rather 62 grounds for a lesser range of views) in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, where an attempt is made to exhaustively enumerate the dogmas presented by those who speculated on the origin of existence and the ultimate destiny of beings.

187 Subjective opinions that people usually tend to cling to as objective truth.

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One who imagines in terms of being equal, superior or inferior, on that account comes to dispute. For one who is not stirred by these three ways (the thought) 'I'm equal or superior' does not occur.

What would the brahmin say is the truth? Or on what account would he dispute saying 'it is false'? In whom there is no (sense of) being equal or unequal, on what account would he dispute?

To one who is detached from (fixed) perceptions there are no bonds. To one who is released through insight there are no delusions. Whoever grasped (fixed) perceptions and dogmatic views, they wander in the world coming to dispute. ...

Clinging to their own view, the skilled ones (experts) come to dispute and affirm diverse theories. 'He who knows thus understands the doctrine, and those who revile this are imperfect' (they say).

In this manner too they quarrel and debate, and say that the other person is a fool unskilled. Which indeed among them is the true theory? They all speak as skilled people.

If one who is not agreeing with another person's doctrine becomes a fool, a beast, and one of inferior wisdom, then really all are fools and of much inferior wisdom. For, all of them cling to dogmatic views.

If by virtue of one's own view one becomes pure, of purified insight, skilled and knowledgeable then none among them is lacking in wisdom. For, they too are possessed of conclusively grasped views.

Still, I do not say that what the fools separately declare among themselves is the reality. Each one of them makes their own dogmatic view true. That is why they consider another as a fool.

What some say is true or real, others say is mean and false. In this manner too, they quarrel and dispute. Therefore, renunciants do not declare a uniform truth.

There is one truth and there is not a second, with regard to which (one truth) people who understand do not come into dispute. Renunciants esteem diverse truths of their own. That is why they do not declare a uniform truth.[188]

Why indeed do they who claim to be skilled ones, they who propound theories speak of diverse truths? Is it indeed the case that there are many and diverse truths? Or is it the case that they are just following the course of their logical reasoning?

There surely are not many and diverse eternal truths in the world apart from perceptual interpretations.[189] They engage in speculative reason in respect of dogmatic views and declare of two teachings, 'true' and 'false'.

The *Duṭṭhaṭṭhaka*, *Pasūra*, *Māgandhiya* and *Cūḷa-viyūha Suttas*: *Sutta-nipāta* 780–787, 824–825, 842–847, 878–886, trans. P.D.P.

188 It is to be noted here that the Buddha's statement that there is one truth (or reality: *sacca*) and no second, is not intended to affirm an absolute truth, but to show that the realization of the peace of nirvana, which from the Buddha's point of view is a reality that can be seen, puts an end to all manner of disputes.

189 The sensory origin of many constructions of 'truth' is noted here, pointing out that apart from *saññā* there cannot be many and diverse truths. *Saññā* represents the subjective interpretation of what is given through the sense faculties; true understanding needs it to be discerningly guided by wisdom.

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The parable of the blind men and the elephant, and the 'undetermined issues' *Th.20*

*This passage introduces a set of ten views on what are known as the undetermined or undeclared (avyākata) issues (see Th.10 and section introduction before this). This was because the Buddha set them aside without answering them, as answering them was irrelevant to attaining liberation from suffering and led to pointless quarrelling. Those who hold such views are portrayed as having fixed on only one limited facet of reality, which they perceived only partially, and then over-generalised from this. In another passage (*Majjhima-nikāya *I.428–431), where a monk says that he will abandon being a monk unless the Buddha gives answers on the ten undeclared issues, the Buddha says he had never promised to give answers to these questions, and likens the monk to someone shot by a poisoned arrow refusing medical treatment until he knows everything about who shot it and about the composition of the arrow.*

'Sir, here in Sāvatthī live many renunciants, brahmins and wandering ascetics who pursue other teachings, and are holding various views, having various preferences, having various likes, having dependence on various forms of dogmatic clinging. The views of these renunciants and brahmins include:

The world is eternal: this alone is true and everything else is false.

The world is non-eternal: this alone is true and everything else is false.

The world is finite: this alone is true and everything else is false.

The world is infinite: this alone is true and everything else is false.

The life principle is the same as the mortal body: this alone is true and everything else is false.

The life principle is different from the mortal body: this alone is true and everything else is false.

After death, the Tathāgata[190] is: this alone is true and everything else is false.

After death, the Tathāgata is not: this alone is true and everything else is false.

After death, the Tathāgata both is and is not: this alone is true and everything else is false.

After death, the Tathāgata neither is nor is not: this alone is true and everything else is false.

They live piercing each other with sharp dagger-like words disputing, and quarrelling saying "Reality is like this and not like that; reality is not like that but it is like this".'

'Monks, the wandering ascetics who pursue other teachings are blind and lacking in vision. They do not know what is beneficial and non-beneficial. They do not know the reality and unreality. Not knowing the reality and unreality, they live piercing each other with sharp dagger-like words ... In the past, monks, there was a certain king in Sāvatthī. Then that king called a certain person and told him: "Friend, come here. Assemble all the people in Sāvatthī who were blind from

190 The term *Tathāgata* literally means Thus-gone or Thus-come. Here it stands for anyone who has attained the ultimate goal of the religious life, one who has reached ultimate truth – one who has attained to and teaches from what is 'thus': true reality. Often it is used specifically to mean the Buddha.

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birth in one place." He said "Alright, Lord" to the king in response and, taking everyone born blind in Sāvatthī, went to that king and said to him: "Lord, I have made all those born blind in Sāvatthī to assemble."

"If so friend, present an elephant to these people born blind." He said: "Alright, Lord" and presented the elephant to the people born blind. Saying "the elephant is like this", he presented the elephant's head to some ... the ear to some ... the tusk to some ... the trunk to some ... the body to some ... the foot to some ... the thigh to some ... the tail to some and the tail-end to some ...

He went to the king and said "Lord, an elephant has been observed by these people born blind. It's the king's turn now."

Monks, then that king went to those people born blind and asked: "Have you people born blind observed an elephant?" "Yes Lord, we have observed an elephant." "If so, you people born blind, say what an elephant is like."

Those ... who had felt the head of the elephant said, "The elephant is like a pot". Those ... who had felt the elephant's ear said, "The elephant is like a winnowing basket". Those ... who had felt the elephant's tusk said, "The elephant is like a ploughshare". Those ... who had felt the elephant's body said, "The elephant is like a storehouse". Those ... who had felt the elephant's leg said, "The elephant is like a pillar". Those ... who had felt the elephant's thigh said, "The elephant is like a mortar". Those ... who had felt the elephant's tail said, "The elephant is like a pestle". Those ... who had felt the elephant's tail-end said, "The elephant is like a broom". They, saying the elephant is like this and not like that ... fought each other with their fists. The king was amused at that.

In the same way monks, the wandering ascetics who pursue other teachings are blind and lacking in vision ... They live piercing each other with sharp dagger-like words disputing, and quarrelling'

Paṭhama-nānātitthiya Sutta: *Udāna* 67–69, trans. P.D.P.

The teachings as having a practical focus

Th.21 The Buddha as teaching what he knew to be both true and spiritually useful

When teaching someone, the Buddha selected, from what he knew to be true, what he saw as spiritually useful for the person to hear, whether or not they found it agreeable.

So, too, prince, such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be not fact, not true, not connected with the goal, and which is unwelcome and disagreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter. Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be fact, true, but not connected with the goal, and which is unwelcome and disagreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter. Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be fact, true, connected with the goal, and which is unwelcome and disagreeable to others: the Tathāgata knows the time to use such speech. ... [These three formulations are then repeated with

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'which is welcome and agreeable to others' in place of 'which is unwelcome and disagreeable to others'.] Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has compassion for beings.

Abhaya-rājakumāra Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.395, trans. P.H.

The right and wrong grasp of the teaching *Th.22*

In this passage, the Buddha responds to a monk who claims that attachment to sensual pleasures poses no danger, seeing him as a fault-finding person intent only on trumpeting his own view, not using the teachings appropriately.

Monks, here some foolish men learn the Dhamma ... but having learnt it, do not closely examine the meaning of those teachings with insight. When they do not closely examine the meaning of those teachings, the teachings have no appeal to them when they contemplate them. They learn the Dhamma for the advantage of fault finding or for the advantage of defending their theory. For whatever purpose they should learn it, they do not have that purpose fulfilled. Those teachings wrongly grasped by them will conduce to their harm and suffering for a long time. Just as a man needing a snake, looking for a snake, wandering in search of one, would see a large snake and take hold of it by the coils or the tail. That snake would then turn round and bite the hand or arm or any other limb. On account of this he would meet with death or deadly suffering. What is the reason for this? It is because of his wrong grasp of the snake.

Alagaddūpama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.133–134, trans. P.D.P.

The Dhamma is for crossing over but not for clinging to *Th.23*

This passage explains that the Dhamma – Buddhist teachings, practices and the states of mind they lead to – are to reach the 'further shore' that is nirvana, beyond suffering, and are not to be clung to with attachment and dogmatism. One needs to cultivate good states of mind without attachment to them.

Monks, I will show you how the Dhamma is comparable to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over but not for the purpose of grasping. Listen to it and bear it in mind well. Just as a man who has come to the highway would see a large stretch of water, (of which) the near shore is insecure and fearful, and the further shore secure and without fear. There is no ship, boat or bridge to cross over from the near shore to the further shore. It occurs to him thus: 'What if I build a raft by collecting grass, sticks, branches and creeper?' So he built a raft by collecting grass, sticks, branches and creepers and, making effort with hands and feet, reached the other shore safely. Then to the one who has crossed over this thought occurred: 'This raft was of great service to me. I safely crossed over to the other shore depending on it, putting forth effort with my hands and feet. What if I mount it on my head or haul it on my back and go where I like?' Monks, is he doing the right thing if he does so with the raft? And doing what, will he be doing the right thing with the raft?

Monks, to the man who has crossed over this thought might occur: 'This raft was of great service to me, I safely crossed over to the other shore depending on it and putting forth effort with my hands and feet. What if I pulled it up to dry ground, or sunk it in the water and go

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where I like?' A man doing that would be doing the right thing. Just so, monks, my Dhamma is comparable to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over and not for grasping hold of. Even good states should be let go of by those who understand. How much so bad states?

Alagaddūpama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.134–135, trans. P.D.P.

Th.24 Put good teachings into practice, rather than learning many unhelpful things

Although reciting many sacred texts, the heedless one who does not act accordingly is like a cowherd counting only others' cattle: such a one does not partake in the renunciant life.

Better than a thousand verses of meaningless words is one word of a verse, hearing which one is calmed.

Dhammapada 19 and 101, trans. P.H.

The way to liberating knowledge

Th.25 Direct experience as more reliable than tradition or reasoning

The first passage here is part of a critique of various grounds as a basis for living a satisfactory religious life. The first ground is reliance on a teacher who said he has uninterrupted omniscience, yet who meets with unanticipated misfortunes, which he then explains away by saying 'It was destined to be like that'. The quoted part of the passage critiques reliance on an authoritative traditional teaching, or on speculative reasoning. In the second passage, the Buddha emphasizes that his knowledge is from direct experience, which in his teaching comes from the great calm and mindfulness of meditation.

Sandaka, some teacher here is one who depends on hearing systematically transmitted sacred teachings. He is one who takes to be true what is heard as systematically transmitted sacred teachings. He teaches a doctrine based on hearing systematically transmitted sacred teachings handed down through generations in the form 'so it was said', 'so it was said', in accordance with sacred collections of traditional teachings. But for one who depends on hearing systematically transmitted sacred teachings ... he may have remembered it well or not remembered it well. Furthermore, it may be in accordance with fact and it may be otherwise ... This, Sandaka, is the second unsatisfactory form of religious life declared by the perfectly awakened Buddha, the arahant who knows and sees. And on this basis an intelligent person would not live a religious life, and if he lives one he would not gain a right approach, a wholesome state.

And again, Sandaka, some teacher here is a rationalist and investigator. He teaches a doctrine based on what is self-evident to him, beaten out by logic and resorting to investigation. In the case of a rationalist and investigator, there is what is well-reasoned and there is what is ill-reasoned. It may also be in accordance with fact and it may also be otherwise ... (As just described) this, Sandaka, is the third unsatisfactory form of religious life declared by the perfectly awakened Buddha ...

Sandaka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.520, trans. P.D.P.

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There are, Bhāradvāja, some renunciants and brahmins who ... on the basis of systematically transmitted sacred teachings claim ... to have attained here and now perfection in ultimate higher knowledge, like, for instance, the brahmins who profess (knowledge of) the three *Vedas*.[191] There are some renunciants and brahmins who ... are rationalists and investigators. There are (also) those who ... have by themselves experienced higher knowledge of Dhamma and claim ... perfection in ultimate higher knowledge. Bhāradvāja, I am one of them.

Saṅgārava Sutta: *Majjhima-nikāya* II.211, trans. P.D.P.

Unreliable grounds for knowledge and ethical guidance *Th.26*

This passage emphasizes testing teachings against one's own experience, rather than accepting them simply based on tradition, reasoning, or being impressed by, or allegiance to, a particular teacher. One should personally assess the moral fruits of particular teachings. The focus here is not on the propositional content that a teaching may include, but the mind-states it encourages, and the moral fruits it produces – though the states of delusion and its opposite are relevant to propositional content.

The Kesaputtiya Kālāmas spoke thus to the Blessed One: 'Sir, there are some renunciants and brahmins who come to Kesaputta. They expound and illumine their own theory. They despise, revile, speak contemptuously of, and insult the theories of others. Other renunciants and brahmins also come to Kesaputta and do the same. Sir, to us there is doubt; there is indeed perplexity as to who among these venerable renunciants and brahmins speaks the truth and who speaks falsehood.'

[The Buddha:] 'It is fit for you to be in doubt, to be perplexed. For, perplexity has arisen to you in a situation where doubt ought to be. Come O Kālāmas, do not depend on hearing systematically transmitted sacred teachings, successive traditions, hearsay, a body of scriptural collections, speculative reasoning, inferential reasoning, reasoned cogitation, the reflective acceptance of a view, the seeming capability (of someone), or on (the idea that) "(this) renunciant is our venerated teacher".

When Kālāmas, you know for yourselves: "These things are unwholesome, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the wise, when these things are adopted and practised they conduce to harm and suffering", then Kālāmas you may abandon them.

Kālāmas, is the arising of greed within a person for his welfare or not?' 'Venerable sir, it is not for his welfare.' 'Kālāmas, a greedy person with a mind obsessed by greed, destroys living things, takes what is not given, commits adultery, tells lies, and incites others to do the same, conducing to harm and suffering for a long time.' 'Yes, venerable sir.' [The same is then said of hatred and delusion.]

'Kālāmas, are these things wholesome or unwholesome?' 'Venerable sir, they are unwholesome.' 'Are they blameworthy or not blameworthy?' 'Blameworthy, venerable sir.' 'Are they censured or praised by the wise?' 'Censured, venerable sir.' 'Undertaken and practised, do they

191 The sacred texts of Brahmanism, the early form of Hinduism, seen to contain eternal teachings revealed by the gods.

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lead to harm and suffering or not, how is it in this case?' 'Undertaken and practised, these things lead to harm and suffering. So it is for us in this case.' ... [The passage goes on to recommend non-greed (i.e. anti-greed, generosity), non-hate (loving kindness) and non-delusion (clarity of mind, wisdom) as things that one can know for oneself as wholesome and as leading to welfare and happiness.]

Kesaputta (or Kālāma) Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.188–189, trans. P.D.P. and P.H.

Th.27 Belief is not the same as knowledge

This passage, as the one above, criticises sole reliance on unsupported faith, approval, oral tradition, consideration of reasons, or reflective acceptance of a view. Rather, the emphasis is on finding a teacher with trustworthy moral and mental characteristics, who gives teachings which conform to reason, can be practised, and enable personal transformation.

'There are these five things that have two-fold immediate consequence. What five are they? They are: faith, approval, systematically transmitted sacred teachings, reasoned cogitation, and reflective acceptance of a view. However, Bhāradvāja, it may be that something is taken with much faith, yet it is empty, vain and false; and if something is not taken with much faith, yet it is real, factual and not otherwise. ... [Similarly for the other four grounds] A person who is engaged in the preservation of truth should not come to the definite conclusion, "This alone is true and everything else is false."'

'Good Gotama, to what extent is there preservation of truth; to what extent does one preserve the truth? We question good Gotama about preservation of truth.' 'If Bhāradvāja, for a person there is faith, and he says, "such is my faith", he preserves the truth. However, he does not yet come to the definite conclusion, "this alone is the truth and everything else is false"... We lay down the preservation of truth to this extent, but yet there is no awakening to truth.' ...

'To what extent is there awakening to truth, and to what extent does one become awakened to truth?' 'Here Bhāradvāja, a monk resides in a certain village or township. Then a householder or one of householder's family, approaches him and examines him with regard to three qualities – tendency to greed, tendency to hatred and tendency to delusion: "Is there for this venerable one such a tendency to greed in such a way that his mind being overwhelmed by such a tendency, he would say without knowing 'I know', without seeing 'I see' and even incite others to such a course that would be conducive to their harm and suffering for a long time?" Examining (in this manner) he comes to know thus: "For this venerable one there is not such a tendency to greed ... The bodily and the verbal conduct of this venerable one is like that of a non-greedy person. The Dhamma he expounds is profound, that Dhamma is difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, excellent, not dependent on speculative reason, subtle and possible to be understood by the wise. This teaching cannot easily be expounded by a greedy person." When he finds him to be cleansed of a tendency to greed, he examines further regarding his tendency to hatred ... and tendency to delusion.

When he finds that he is cleansed of a tendency to greed, hatred and delusion, he reposes faith in him. With faith born, he draws near; draw-

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ing near, he sits close to him; sitting close, he lends ear; with attentive ear, he listens to the teaching; having listened, he remembers the teaching; he examines closely the meaning of the remembered teachings. When he closely examines the meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of the teachings; when he gains a reflective acceptance of the teachings, desire is born; when desire is born, he makes an effort; having made an effort, he weighs it up; having weighed it up, he strives; when striving, he realizes the highest truth in his own person, and sees it, having penetrated it with wisdom. To this extent, Bhāradvāja, there is awakening to truth. To this extent one becomes awakened to truth. We lay down awakening to truth to this extent, but yet there is no final arrival at truth.'

'To what extent, good Gotama, is there final arrival at truth?' 'It is by the practice, the (meditative) development and constant cultivation of those very things that there is final arrival at truth.'

Caṅkī Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya II.170–174, trans. P.D.P and P.H.

The step-by-step discourse *Th.28*

This passage shows the typical way in which the Buddha prepared someone to hear and directly understand the heart of his teaching, on suffering and how to transcend it: by first talking of ethical discipline and its karmic fruit, and then the kind of mental renunciation that leads to meditative calm. Only when the mind is then calm, open and receptive was the key message given, such that the person could see that suffering and what originates it can really by transcended and cease. A similar passage is L.34.

Then the Blessed One gave the householder Upāli a step-by-step discourse, that is, talk on giving, talk on ethical discipline, talk on the heaven worlds; he made known the danger, the inferior nature and tendency to defilement of sensual pleasures, and the advantage of renouncing them. When the Blessed One knew that the householder Upāli's mind was ready, open, without hindrances, inspired and confident, then he expounded to him the elevated Dhamma-teaching of the Buddhas: the painful, its origin, its cessation, the path.[192]

Just as a clean cloth with stains removed would take dye evenly, so while the householder Upāli sat there, he obtained the pure and spotless eye of the Dhamma: 'Whatsoever is subject to origination is also subject to cessation.'

Upāli Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.379–380, trans. P.H.

MAHĀYĀNA

Qualities of the Dharma

Worshipping the Dharma *M.14*

In this passage, the Dharma is primarily the profound teachings of the Buddha.

'Blessed One, I have heard people speak of "worshipping the Dharma". What does it mean to "worship the Dharma"?'

192 A brief way of referring to the four Truths of the Noble Ones (see L.27).

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The Blessed One said, 'Worshipping the Dharma, son of good family, means worshipping what the Tathāgata has said. It means worshipping the profound sūtras which bring profound illumination. These sūtras stand in opposition to everything mundane. They are difficult to fathom, difficult to comprehend, and difficult to understand. They are precise, subtle, and their meaning cannot be perceived by the mind. They are included in the collection of teachings on the bodhisattva, and affixed with the seal of the king of sūtras and invocations. They reveal the unstoppable wheel of the Dharma. They grow out of the six perfections.[193] They captivate those who are attracted to them. They follow the thirty-seven practices which help one to attain awakening,[194] and make use of the seven factors of awakening.[195] They introduce living beings to great compassion, and teach them about great loving kindness. They bring an end to the doctrines of Māra[196] and explain dependent arising.[197] They teach that there is no essential self, living being, life force, or person. They teach emptiness, freedom from characteristics, freedom from aspirations, and freedom from accomplishments.[198] They establish the seat of awakening and set the wheel of the Dharma in motion. They are celebrated and praised by gods, nāgas, yakṣas and gandharvas.[199] They preserve the unbroken tradition of the true Dharma. They contain the treasury of the Dharma. They represent a correct understanding of how to worship the pinnacle of the Dharma. They are embraced by all the noble ones, and give instruction in all the practices of a bodhisattva. They introduce the Dharma which is the true nature of reality. They summarise the Dharma, teaching that everything which arises is impermanent, painful, without an essential self, and calm. They demonstrate the harmful power of immorality. They warn those who are obsessed with the views and interpretations of false teachers. They are praised by all the Buddhas. They are the antidote to saṃsāra. They reveal the bliss of nirvana. Teaching sūtras like this, setting them forth, preserving them, examining them, and understanding them – this is what it means to "worship the Dharma".'

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch. 12, sections 10–11, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.15 Delighting in the pleasures of the Dharma

In this passage, the Dharma is the practice of the path to awakening.

'What does it mean to delight in the pleasures of the Dharma?'

The Licchavi Vimalakīrti said, 'It is to delight in unbreakable confidence in the Buddha. It is to delight in the desire to hear the Dharma. It is to delight in the company of the Sangha. It is to delight in honouring spiritual teachers. It is to delight in escaping from the triple

193 Generosity, ethical discipline, patient acceptance, vigour, meditation and wisdom (see M.100–106).

194 See note to M.10.

195 Explained in footnote to M.158.

196 See LI.7.

197 See Th.156ff.

198 That is, awareness of insubstantiality and going on fixation on the specifics of what is perceived, desires and ambitions.

199 Various kinds of divine beings

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world.[200] It is to delight in being free from worldly spheres of activity. It is to delight in always regarding the categories of existence[201] as being like murderers.[202] It is to delight in viewing the elements[203] as being like venomous snakes. It is to delight in correctly perceiving the sense fields to be like an empty village. It is to delight in guarding the awakening-mind. It is to delight in helping living beings. It is to delight in the sharing what you have with others in your practice of generosity. It is to delight in being conscientious in your practice of ethical discipline. It is to delight in being persistent and self-disciplined in your practice of patient acceptance. It is to delight in cultivating wholesome qualities in your practice of vigour. It is to delight in working on yourself in your practice of meditation. It is to delight in ridding yourself of the defilements in your practice of wisdom. It is to delight in the fullness of awakening. It is to delight in defeating Māra. It is to delight in destroying the defilements. It is to delight in purifying one's Buddha-field. It is to delight in accumulating wholesome roots in order to perfect the bodily marks and the secondary characteristics of a Buddha. It is to delight in not being afraid when you hear the profound Dharma. It is to delight in working hard to bring about the three kinds of emancipation.[204] It is to delight in the foundations of nirvana. It is to delight in the adornments of the mandala of awakening, and of not attaining awakening at an inappropriate time. It is to delight in serving those whose conduct matches yours. It is to delight in resisting, with no hatred, those whose conduct does not match yours. It is to delight in serving your spiritual friends. It is to delight in leaving behind friends who are a bad influence on you. It is to delight in the joy and the bliss of the Dharma. It is to delight in developing skill in means. It is to delight in being devoted with vigilance to the practices which help one to attain awakening.[205] This is what it means for a bodhisattva to delight in the pleasures of the Dharma.'

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch. 3, section 64, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Dharma as an ultimate beyond words *M.16*

This passage essentially identifies the Dharma with nirvana and ultimate reality beyond words.

[Ch.5] The Dharma cannot be formulated in concepts or in words. Someone who formulates concepts such as 'I will thoroughly investigate what is painful, give up the causes of the painful, accomplish the cessation of the painful, and practise the path'[206] is concerned with formulating concepts, and not with the Dharma.

200 That is, the entirety of conditioned existence: see 'three realms' in Glossary.

201 The mental and physical processes which make up a being: bodily form, feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness (see Th.151)

202 As whenever they arise in a rebirth, they end in death.

203 The eighteen elements are the six senses (five physical senses plus the mental faculty), their objects, and the related kinds of consciousness. They are portrayed as 'venomous' as they are deceptive, as are the 'sense fields' (the senses and their objects), all being empty of any fixed, permanent essential self.

204 Freedom from characteristics, freedom from aspirations, and freedom from accomplishments: see last note to M.14.

205 See note to M.10.

206 As is said in the Buddha's first discourse (see passage L.27).

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[Ch.3] The Dharma is accessible everywhere. It is like space. It has no colour, marks, or shape. All manifestations have ceased. It has no concept of 'mine'. The formation of the concept of 'mine' has ceased. Its knowledge is not limited. Mind, thought, and consciousness have ceased. It is like nothing else, as it has no rival. It has no causally arisen characteristics. It does not assume anything as its condition. It is united with the expanse of phenomena. It is integral to all phenomena. It makes reality accessible. It conforms to reality by not conforming. It is rooted in the ultimate goal, as it is completely unshakeable. It is unshakeable as it is not based upon the spheres of the six senses.[207] It goes nowhere, and comes from nowhere, as it is not located anywhere. It is united with emptiness. It is majestic in its freedom from characteristics. It is characterised by its freedom from aspirations. Deliberation and reasoning have ceased. It is not raised up or cast down. Coming into being and passing away have ceased. It has no foundation. It has passed completely beyond the range of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. It is neither elevated nor sunk down. It remains firm. It has attained immovability. All wandering has ceased.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.5, section 3, and ch.3, section 6, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Reasons for choosing to practise Buddhism

M.17

The Buddha as guide in dealing with human weaknesses

This passage portrays the situation of unawakened beings, and appeals to the Buddha for help in dealing with the problems it describes.

2. Surrounded by the moat of desire, fortified by the ramparts of arrogance, composed of all states of existence, this great fortress is the triple world.[208]

3. It is plunged in the darkness of delusion and ignorance, consumed by the flames of the three poisons,[209] always subject to the power of Lord Māra. This is where foolish children dwell.

4. They are bound by the chains of craving, undermining good conduct because of their deceitful ways. Blinded by doubt and uncertainty, they wander evil paths.

5. Bound by jealousy and selfishness, they are led into unfortunate states of existence as hungry ghosts, as animals, or in hell. Oppressed by birth, illness, old age and death, they wander about stupefied in the wheel of existences, which is driven by karma.

6. Bright full moon of compassion, splendid sun of wisdom, rising to destroy the ocean of defilements, great sun, shine down on me.[210]

207 In Buddhism, the mind is counted as a sense along with sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch.

208 That is, the entirety of conditioned existence: see 'three realms' in Glossary.

209 Greed, hatred, and delusion.

210 In this verse and the following verses, the Buddha is being addressed.

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7. Full moon of great loving kindness, the light of your wisdom brings peace to living beings, illuminating all without exception. Moon-like king, shed your brilliant radiance on me.

8. King of the realm of the Dharma, with the pure Dharma as your army, you turn the Wheel of the True Dharma. May I be transformed by the excellent Dharma.

9. I have vowed to attain perfect awakening. I am accumulating beneficial karma and virtue, and working to benefit all living beings. Great Teacher, I ask for your protection.

10. Clad in the armour of patient acceptance, brandishing the sword of wisdom, help me to avoid disaster on the evil paths of Māra.

Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Taishō vol.9, text 278, p.688b14–c02, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Disputes and tolerance

Bodhisattvas* do not get involved in disputes** ***M.18

This passage sees bodhisattvas *as inspiring people with their patience when disputes rage around them.*

The bodhisattva Anantavyūha addressed the Buddha, 'Blessed One, in the future when disputes arise, people filled with attachment will act violently towards each other, the three poisons will flourish, and the true Dharma will be disrupted. At that time, bodhisattvas, out of great compassion, will show patient acceptance in the midst of these events, so as to spread the Dharma without getting involved in any disputes. Because they will not get involved in disputes, they will be able to embrace great loving kindness and great compassion, and accumulate wholesome roots.'

Ananta-mukha-pariśodhana-nirdeśa, section 2 of the *Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Taishō* vol.11, text 310, p.21a11–15, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Ultimate reality is not to be disputed ***M.19***

This passage sees 'the way things are' – the true nature of reality, also translated as 'suchness' – as beyond words and disputes, hence one attuned to it avoids disputing with people (cf. Th.17).

Śāriputra, the way things are is the nature of reality. It is the nature of things which are as they are, and which are not as they are not. It is the nature of what is irreducible, immovable, imperturbable. It is the nature of what is unopposed, what is not disputed.

Moreover, Śāriputra, the way things are cannot be disputed. As it cannot be disputed, it is said to be the way things are. The Tathāgatas, though, calls it the disputed. Śāriputra, things should be willingly accepted the way they are. Why then does the Tathāgata describe it as disputed? Śāriputra, this is because the Tathāgata is opposed to all dispute. For this reason, a bodhisattva often avoids all disputes. Moreover, the Tathāgata never engages in disputes, and he has never been the cause of a single dispute. Why is this? It is because the Tathāgata does not oppose anyone, and does not dispute with anyone. Others, though, often oppose him and dispute with him.

Bodhisattva-piṭaka, section 12 of the *Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Taishō* vol.11, text 310, p.283a13–21, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

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The teachings as means to an end

M.20 The teachings should not be objects of clinging

This passage echoes that of Th.23, which compares the Dharma to a raft that helps one cross a river from an unsafe side to a safe, peaceful side (nirvana); it is to be used for this, not to be clung to once it has achieved its aim.

Subhūti, a bodhisattva, a great being, should not grasp at the Dharma, nor at what is not the Dharma. This was what the Tathāgata meant when he said, 'You should understand that a discourse on the Dharma is like a raft. You should leave the Dharma, and certainly what is not the Dharma, behind you.'

Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, section 6, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.21 The way to knowledge

The bodhisattva *should develop the many qualities of the path to awakening, while dispelling any thought of these qualities being substantial, graspable entities.*

At that time, the Venerable Subhūti said to the Blessed One, 'The perfection of wisdom, then, is truly profound. There is no-one who cultivates it, no phenomena which are cultivated, no place of cultivation, and no practice which can bring about its cultivation. Why is this? It is because it is inherent in the meaning of the profound perfection of wisdom that there is not even the least truly extant phenomenon which can be called someone who cultivates, a phenomenon which is cultivated, a place of cultivation, or a practice which can bring about its cultivation.

Blessed One, to cultivate space is to cultivate the perfection of wisdom. To cultivate all phenomena is to cultivate the perfection of wisdom. To cultivate phenomena which are not real is to cultivate the perfection of wisdom. To cultivate non-existence is to cultivate the perfection of wisdom. To cultivate non-acquisition is to cultivate the perfection of wisdom. To cultivate the removal of phenomena is to cultivate the perfection of wisdom.'

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol. 7, text 220, pp.617c03–c12, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The teachings are pitched at different levels, to attract all

M.22 The Buddha adapts his teachings to the capacities of his hearers

In this passage, from the text generally known as the 'Lotus Sūtra'*, the Buddha emphasizes that he uses skill in means to teach people, knowing that they are of various inclinations. To those of relatively low inclinations, he teaches that the goal is nirvana, in the sense of personal liberation from the round of rebirths. This way is only one of three spiritual' vehicles' (yāna), though (see M.64–7.). The second vehicle is said to lead to becoming a solitary-buddha – one with strong wisdom, but not enough to compassionately teach others effectively. The third vehicle leads to becoming a perfectly awakened Buddha, of*

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immense wisdom and compassion. This is in fact the goal that the Buddha, in the Lotus Sūtra, *teaches is attainable by all beings; the first two vehicles are only provisional ones, and their goals are not the real, highest goal.*

42. Listen. Śāriputra. The Buddhas, the Guides, teach the Dharma of the Buddha, the best of men, by applying skill in means in hundreds of different ways.

43. I have seen the intentions, the conduct, the various different inclinations, and the excellent deeds of countless living beings, as well as the wholesome actions they have performed in the past,

44. and I bring these living beings to the Dharma by giving various different kinds of interpretations and causal explanations. By giving reasons, and hundreds of analogies, I bring joy to living beings.

45. I speak sūtras, recite verses, tell stories, jātaka tales,[211] tales of miracles, give summaries, and make hundreds of comparisons. I also communicate in beautiful prose mixed with verse, and by giving instructions.

46. There are those who are inclined towards what is inferior, who lack knowledge, who have not practised with countless Buddhas, who cling to saṃsāra, and who are in great pain. To them I reveal nirvana.

47. The self-arisen one employs skill in means in order to awaken them to the understanding of a Buddha, but would never declare, 'You will become Buddhas in this world'. ...

62. Śāriputra, if I told living beings to cultivate the desire for awakening,[212] those ignorant beings would all go astray, and never grasp the meaning of my well-spoken words.

63. I understand what they are like, those living beings who have not spent a long time practising in previous lives. They are fixated on sensual pleasures, intent on craving, stupefied by minds filled with delusion.

64. They fall into lower states of existence because of their sensual desire, their minds tormented in the six realms of existence. They fill the cemeteries again and again. With only a little beneficial karma, they are oppressed by suffering.

65. They are permanently entangled in the thicket of wrong views, thinking, 'There is. There is not. It is like this. It is not like this.' They rely on sixty-two[213] kinds of wrong views and remain stuck in the unreal.

66. They are difficult to purify, arrogant, deceitful, crooked, dishonest, unlearned, and immature. Even in the course of countless thousands of lives, they never hear the wondrous voice of a Buddha.

67. I use skill in means, Śāriputra, to tell them, 'Put an end to suffering.' I see that living beings are oppressed by suffering, and so I reveal nirvana to them.

68. I tell them that all phenomena are permanently blissful and com-

211 Stories of the Buddha's previous lives.

212 I.e. the awakening of a Buddha.

213 The figure sixty-two (*dvāṣaṣṭi*) was perhaps selected here simply because of its phonetic similarity to the phrase 'It is like this. It is not like this.' (*tathāsti nāsti*) which immediately precedes it. It may also be a reference to the sixty-two wrong-views listed in the *Brahmajala Sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*.

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pletely tranquil from the very start, and that an heir of the Buddha who completes their practice will, in the future, become a Victorious One.

69. I reveal the three yānas as an application of skill in means, but there is only one yāna and one doctrine. The Guides have only one teaching.

Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra, ch.2 vv.42–47, vv.62–69, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA
Qualities of the Dharma

V.7 Testing the teachings

This passage holds that the Buddha's teaching should be critically assessed, rather than just blindly believed. It is from a work of the Indian Mādhyamika scholar-monk Śāntarakṣita (c.680–740), who helped first establish Buddhism in Tibet.

Monks, those who are learned should adopt what I say after having examined it, and not simply out of reverence – just as one would test gold by heating it, cutting it, and rubbing it.

Tattvasaṅgraha v. 3588, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

V.8 True happiness can only be attained through direct realization of the Dharma

Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, c. 1052–c.1135) is one of Tibet's most famous yogis and poets. He was a student of the great translator Marpa (1012–1097), and a major figure in the history of the Kagyupa order of Tibetan Buddhism. He is most well-known by his spontaneously composed poems, collected several centuries after his death in the Mila Gurbum, *the 'One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa.*[214] *The passage below, juxtaposing the happiness of the true tantric yogi with the unhappiness of the fake and pretentious 'Dharma-practitioner' is one of his most famous songs. The main thrust of the song is that true happiness can only be attained through direct realization of the Dharma.*

Knowing his own nature and understanding things as they are, the yogi is always happy. Chasing after illusions and tormenting himself with pain, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Resting in an uncontrived state of mind, immaculate on his changeless natural seat,[215] the yogi is always happy. Following after his sensations, falling victim to attachments and aversions, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Having realized all experience as the Dharma-body,[216] having severed all fears, hopes and doubts, the yogi is always happy. Blathering nonsense, not having subdued the eight worldly concerns,[217] the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

214 For an English translation, see *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, trans. Garma C.C. Chang (HSM). See pp.459–61 for passage.

215 The 'changeless natural seat' is the nature of the mind (see V.70).

216 See section introduction above M.9.

217 The eight worldly concerns are the four pairs of gain and loss, pleasure and pain, praise and criticism, and fame and infamy.

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Having understood everything as mind, taking all his experience as a friendly helper, the yogi is always happy. Wasting his human life on distractions only to regret it at the time of his death, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

With full realization internalized, having taken the natural seat of things as they are,[218] the yogi is always happy. His head full of desires, hankering and yearning after things, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Having a constant experience of realization through releasing concepts as they arise, the yogi is always happy. Believing in conventional expressions, not having understood the nature of the mind, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Having renounced all worldly affairs, being without any goal-oriented fixation, the yogi is always happy. Protecting his wife and relatives through taking upon himself loads of misery, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Having turned away from clinging, having realized everything as of an illusory nature, the yogi is always happy. Having entered the path of distraction, binding his body and mind into servitude, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Having traversed the paths and (bodhisattva) stages by riding the horse of vigour, the yogi is always happy. Fettered by laziness, anchored in the ocean of saṃsāra, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Having cleared away misconceptions through learning and pondering, watching the spectacle in his mind,[219] the yogi is always happy. Paying lip-service to the Dharma while acting in unwholesome ways, the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Having severed all fears, hopes and doubts, living without interruption in the innate state (of the mind), the yogi is always happy. Being led by the nose, saving face and living in conformity (with others), the 'Dharma-practitioner' is always unhappy.

Having turned his back on all things in the world, always practising the divine Dharma, the yogi is always happy.

'One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa', pp.224–25, trans. T.A.

Adversities as blessings in disguise that turn one to the Dharma *V.9*

This passage is a famous set of verses, quoted in 'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', by Longchenpa (1308–1364), a most prominent master and author of the Nyingmapa order,

Pressed by hostility, we turn to the Dharma and find the path of liberation; thank you, harm-doers!

Afflicted by misery, we turn to the Dharma and find eternal bliss; thank you, suffering!

Assailed by demons, we turn to the Dharma and find fearlessness; thank you, evil spirits!

218 The expression 'the natural seat of things as they are' refers to the natural state of mind and phenomena in the nature of mind.

219 Looking at everything that appears in the mind as a magic show.

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Hated by others, we turn to the Dharma and find true well-being; thank you, enemies!

Distressed by accidents, we turn to the Dharma and find the changeless path; thank you, calamities!

Provoked by others, we turn to the Dharma and find the core meaning; thank you, provokers!

To repay your kindness, I dedicate my virtue to you!

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.289–90, trans. T.A.

Concise expositions of the Dharma

V.10 Lamp for the Path to Awakening

The 'Lamp for the Path to Awakening' (Skt Bodhi-patha-pradīpa*) is a work of paramount importance in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. It was authored by the great teacher Atiśa (982–1054), otherwise known as Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna, who spearheaded the revival of Buddhism in Tibet that was to be called the 'later dissemination' of the Dharma. A respected elder and scholar-monk at the great monastic university of Vikramaśīla, he was invited to Tibet in his later years. His missionary activities led to the formation of a new religious order, that of the Kadampas. His most well-known work, translated here in its entirety, is a succinct summary of the late Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna conception of the Buddhist path as it was transmitted at that time into Tibet.*[220]

[Introduction]

Homage to the bodhisattva, the youthful Mañjuśrī[221]

1. I pay homage with great respect to all the Victorious Ones of the three times, to their teaching, and to the spiritual community. Urged by the good disciple Awakening Light,[222] I shall light the lamp for the path to awakening.

2. One should know that there are three kinds of persons: small, middling, and supreme. I shall describe each individual class and explain their distinguishing characteristics.

3. The least type of person is to be known as someone who in every way seeks for himself nothing more than the pleasures of saṃsāra.

4. Whoever is seeking just his or her own peace, by turning their back on worldly pleasures and refraining from evil, is a middling type of person.

5. The person who wants nothing less than truly to put all the suffering of others to an end, as if it belonged to his own mind, is called 'supreme'.

[Arousing the awakening-mind]

6. I am going to explain the authentic methods taught by the spiritual masters to those excellent beings who seek supreme awakening.[223]

220 The root verses of the text are accompanied by an extensive self-commentary.

221 The *bodhisattva* of wisdom.

222 Buddhist monk and ruler of the Western Tibetan Kingdom of Guge, who invited Atiśa to Tibet.

223 That is the supreme type of persons who seek to attain awakening in order to help all sentient beings.

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7. Facing an image of the perfectly awakened Buddha, a stūpa,[224] or a sacred Dharma text, make an offering of flowers, incense, or whatever material things you may have.

8. With the seven-part ritual taught in 'Samantabhadra's Conduct'[225] and with the intention to never turn back until you reach the core of awakening,

9. With strong faith in the Three Jewels, placing one knee on the ground, your palms pressed together, first take refuge[226] three times!

10. Then, with the attitude of loving kindness to all sentient beings as a preliminary, look upon them without exception as going through the pains of birth, death, and so forth, in the three lower realms.[227]

11. Then, with the wish to free beings from the suffering of pain – from all pain and the causes of pain – arouse the awakening-mind,[228] fully committed to never turning back.

12. The good qualities of arousing such a pure mind of aspiration have been thoroughly explained by Maitreya in the 'Flower-array Sūtra'.

13. Having read that sūtra, or having heard it from your master, think about the immeasurable good qualities of the mind of perfect awakening, and then arouse that mind again and again to develop it even further.

14. Its karmic benefits are well-taught in the 'Viradatta Request Sūtra'. As it is summarised there in merely three stanzas, I am going to quote it here:

15. 'How great is the karmic benefit of the awakening-mind? If it had form, it would fill up completely the sphere of space, and it would go even beyond that.

16. If someone were to fill with jewels as many Buddha-fields as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, and offer them to the Guardians of this World,

17. Yet it would be surpassed by the offering of someone who pressed his palms together and directed his mind towards awakening, because that would never end.'

[Taking the bodhisattva vow to practise engagement with the awakening-mind]

18. Having aroused the pure mind of aspiration for awakening, make much effort to develop it thoroughly. Fully observe the training as it has been taught, so that you keep it in mind in your future lives as well.

19. Without the vow of engagement with the awakening-mind, your

224 A monument for bodily relics: see Th.94. They can also contain Buddhist texts as 'Dharma-relics'.

225 The '*Samantabhadra-caryā*' chapter of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is the main source for the standard Mahāyāna practice of the 'seven-part ritual' – consisting of prostration to the awakened ones, offerings to them, confession before them, rejoicing at their good qualities, requesting the Buddhas to turn the wheel of Dharma, supplicating them not to enter final nirvana so that they can continue to teach, and dedicating all karmic benefit to complete awakening.

226 See Th.93 and M.49–50.

227 The worlds of animals, 'hungry ghosts' and hell-beings.

228 *Bodhicitta*, in the sense of the aspiration to attain full Buddhahood, for the sake of all beings. See V.33.

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authentic aspiration is not going to increase. So, if you wish to develop your aspiration for complete awakening, take it on definitely through striving for its sake.

20. Those who always keep any other vow from among the seven types (of vows)[229] of individual liberation have the good fortune of being able to take the bodhisattva vows – others do not.

21. From among the seven types of individual liberation (vows) taught by the Tathāgata, it is the vows of celibate behaviour – that is the monastic vows – that he has called most excellent.

22. Take the (bodhisattva) vow from a good spiritual master with authentic qualities, according to the ritual described in the 'Ethical discipline' chapter of the 'Stages of the Bodhisattva'.

23. A good spiritual master should be known as someone who is skilled in the vow ceremony, lives by the vows himself, and has the confidence and compassion to confer them.

24. In case you could not find such a spiritual master, even though you have tried, there is another authentic ritual for taking the vow, which I shall now explain.

25. For that, I will describe here very clearly the way Mañjuśrī aroused his awakening-mind in the past, when he was called Aṃbarāja, as taught in the 'Ornament of Mañjuśrī's Buddha-Field Sūtra':

26. 'In the presence of my guardians, I arouse the mind of complete awakening and inviting all beings as my guests, I vow to liberate them from saṃsāra.

27. From now on until pure awakening is attained, I shall not harbour any ill-will, anger, avarice, or envy.

28. I shall be practising celibacy, abandon all evil and (worldly) desire, and shall train in the wake of the Buddha by delighting in the vows of ethical discipline.

29. I shall not long to reach awakening for myself in a speedy way, but shall stay until the end of time for the sake of but one sentient being.

30. I shall purify an immeasurable, inconceivable number of fields[230] and stay everywhere, in all directions, for the sake of all those who call my name.

31. In every way, I shall purify my actions of body and speech, as well as purify my mental acts; I shall not commit any unwholesome deeds.'

32. Living by the vow of engagement with the awakening-mind, the cause of complete purity in body, speech, and mind, train yourself well in the three trainings of discipline,[231] and your respect for the three trainings of discipline will increase.

33. Therefore, through making effort in the vows made by bodhisattvas for thoroughly pure, complete awakening, the collections (of good qualities) for complete awakening will be fully completed.

229 The seven types of vows of discipline are for the five types of monastic person – the male and female novice, the nun-in-training, and the full monk and nun – and for the male and female layperson. See V.48.

230 I.e. purify the worlds of sentient beings into Buddha-fields.

231 These are: the discipline of keeping one's vows, the discipline of gaining karmic benefit, and the discipline of helping others (see LP pp.96–7). See V.46–8.

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[The development of calm abiding (*śamatha*) and the attainment of the higher knowledges]

34. All the Buddhas have asserted that the collections of karmic benefit and wisdom[232] cannot be fully completed without the development of higher knowledge.[233]

35. Just as a bird cannot fly in the sky until its wings are fully developed, you also cannot serve the interests of sentient beings as long as you lack the power of higher knowledge.

36. The karmic benefits gained in a single day by somebody having higher knowledge cannot be attained even in a hundred lives by someone lacking the higher knowledges.

37. Whoever wants to complete quickly the collections for complete awakening will accomplish the higher knowledges through striving, rather than by being lazy.

38. Without the attainment of calm abiding,[234] higher knowledge is not going to arise. Therefore, keep striving over and again for the accomplishment of calm abiding.

39. Should you neglect the ingredients of calm abiding, however much effort you put into meditation, not even in one full millennium would you be able to attain meditative absorption.

40. Therefore, maintain the ingredients taught in the 'Concentration Equipment Chapter',[235] and place your mind in being wholesome on any object of concentration that you prefer.

[The perfection of wisdom]

41. When the yogi has accomplished calm abiding, the higher knowledges are also accomplished. But still, without the practice of perfect wisdom, the obscurations cannot be depleted.

42. Therefore, in order to discard all obscurations, both the emotional and the cognitive types,[236] the yogi's cultivation of perfect wisdom should always be accompanied by (right) method (of practice).

43. Because wisdom without method and method without wisdom are both taught to be bondage (to saṃsāra), therefore do not abandon either.

44. In order to eliminate doubts concerning what is wisdom and what is method, I shall clarify the actual difference between methods and wisdom.

45. Except for perfect wisdom, every kind of wholesome practice – such as the perfection of giving – is called a 'method' by the victors (Buddhas).

232 The two accumulations needed for the attainment of truly complete Buddhahood.

233 See Th.141.

234 Calm abiding develops the meditative absorptions: see Th.132 and 140.

235 *Samādhi-saṃbhāra-parivarta*, a work by Bodhibhadra (one of Atiśa's main teachers) summarizes the ingredients as: (1) renunciation of the world, (2) preparation through study, (3) avoiding premature action, (4) abandoning anxiety, (5) dissatisfaction with the world, (6) mindfulness of benefits, (7) diligence, (8) integrating calm abiding with insight (*vipaśyanā*), and (9) the means of staying/persevering in the things listed above (LP p.120).

236 Emotional defilements obstructing liberation, and cognitive errors obstructing omniscience.

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46. Whoever cultivates the wisdoms empowered by the cultivation of method will quickly attain awakening. Whoever cultivates just the lack of identities[237] will not.

47. Realizing the (five) categories of existence,[238] the (twelve) sense-bases, and the (eighteen) elements[239] as unproduced, cognizing their emptiness of inherent existence – this is what is referred to as 'perfect wisdom'.

48. Something (already) existent (in a substantial way) cannot be produced, nor something non-existent, like a sky flower. Both together cannot occur either, because it would incur both of those mistakes.[240]

49. Things are not produced either from themselves, or from something else, or from both. Neither are they produced without any reason, and so they lack any identity of their own.

50. Moreover, when you analyse phenomena through the (method of) 'one and many',[241] you will not find any substantial entity, and will have ascertained the lack of inherent existence.

51. The nature of things has been proven to be emptiness in (Nāgārjuna's) 'Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness' and the 'Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way' (MMK).

52. I have not elaborated the reasoning here, because my text would become too long, but have presented (emptiness) as a mere tenet for the sake of meditative cultivation.

53. Therefore, not having found any inherent existence in any phenomena at all, the cultivation of (insight into) the lack of identities is the actual cultivation of wisdom.

[Overcoming conceptualization]

54. Just as wisdom cannot see any inherent existence in anything, so too should that very wisdom be analysed and then cultivated nonconceptually.

55. Saṃsāra comes from conceptualization – it consists of conceptual thoughts. Therefore the abandonment of all thoughts is the most supreme nirvana.[242]

56. The Blessed One has also said, 'Conceptualization is immense ignorance that makes you fall into the ocean of saṃsāra. Abiding in thought-free meditative absorption, the non-conceptual mind brightens up like the sky.'[243]

237 The cultivation of wisdom means meditating on the lack of personal and phenomenal identies (see V.75–6).

238 Mental and physical processes making up a person.

239 The sense-bases (senses and their objects) plus the corresponding kind of consciousness.

240 See V.75, 'Meditation on the lack of personal identity, or self-essence' by Gampopa, where the same line of reasoning (based on the inter-dependence of the two concepts 'cause' and 'result') is used to prove the lack of personal identity.

241 The classical example is the concept of an 'atom' which is found to be neither 'one' nor 'many': 'one' atom cannot be found because anything with extension in space (or time) is infinitely divisible, and if there are no 'ones', there cannot be 'many' (see V.76).

242 Cf. MMK XVIII.5: 'When action and defilement are consumed, there is liberation. (Insight into) emptiness stops the proliferation of action and defilement, which comes from the proliferation of conceptual thought.'

243 Source unidentified

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57. Also, in the 'Dhāraṇī Leading to Non-conceptuality' he said 'If bodhisattvas could conceive of this true Dharma without thoughts, they would transcend conceptuality so hard to get through, and would gradually attain the non-conceptual state.'

58. Having ascertained through scripture and through reasoning that phenomena are not produced, nor inherently existent, you should cultivate that realization without conceptuality.

[Tantric aspects of the path]

59. Once you have familiarized yourself with that (non-conceptual state), you will reach the stages of 'heat' and so forth,[244] and then the (bodhisattva stages) of being 'overjoyed',[245] and before long, you will become an awakened Buddha.

60. If you wish to complete the collections for awakening with ease, through the strength of the eight great accomplishments like the accomplishment of an excellent vase and so forth,[246]

61. Through the activities of pacifying, enriching, and so on, accomplished by the very power of mantra;[247] and if you want to practise secret mantra as explained in the Action, Performance and other (classes of tantra),[248]

62. Then, in order to receive the preceptor empowerment,[249] please your revered master (guru) by offering him service and precious gifts, as well as through obeying his commands.

63. Once, due to having pleased your master, you have been bestowed with the fully complete preceptor empowerment, you are completely purified of the results of (past) evil, and are ready to accomplish the actual accomplishments.

64. The secret empowerment and the empowerment of wisdom[250] cannot be bestowed on those observing celibacy because it is strictly prohibited in the 'Great Tantra of the Primordial Buddha'.

65. If they received those empowerments, those abiding in austere

244 The stages of heat, peak, patience, and supreme dharma are four successive stages on the path of connection, whereby one 'connects' to the ten stages of the *bodhisattva* who is on the noble path.

245 Or 'joyous' (*pramudita*), the name of the first of the ten *bodhisattva* stages.

246 From among the numerous 'great accomplishments' listed in Vajrayāna texts, the set of eight referred to here are those of the excellent (wishing) vase, swift-footedness, the invincible sword, going underground, invisibility, and the rest (see LP pp.167. and 184. n.7). Some of these are similar to the 'supernormal powers' listed in Theravāda texts (see L.35 and Th.48 and 141).

247 The four types of awakened activities developed on the path of Tantra or Mantra (both terms are used interchangeably for Vajrayāna) are those of pacifying, enriching, magnetizing (attracting), and destroying.

248 The four classes of *tantra* known by the new schools of Tibetan Buddhism are *kriyā-tantra, caryā-tantra, yoga-tantra,* and *anuttara-tantra*. They represent increasingly profound levels of understanding that one has the awakening-mind, with each level having their different respective practices. It is the first two that are mentioned here.

249 The ritual of initiation that gives one authorization to perform a certain Vajrayāna practice.

250 The two higher levels of tantric initiation, which involve activities of a sexual nature and are thus unsuitable for monastics. In current practice, monastics are given initiations in a symbolic way.

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celibacy would be doing something that is forbidden, and thus their vow of austerity would be impaired.

66. Those living by the (monastic) discipline would be subjected to downfalls which are their defeat.[251] They would definitely fall into a lower rebirth and never gain accomplishment.

67. If you have received the preceptor empowerment and you know emptiness, then there is no fault in your listening to and explaining the tantras, performing burnt offering rituals[252] and so forth.

[End words]

68. This short summary of the path to awakening was composed at the request of Awakening Light by the Elder Dīpaṃkaraśrī-(jñāna) who has perceived the Dharma as explained in the sūtras and tantras.

'The Lamp for the Path to Awakening', trans. T.A.

V.11 Advice from Milarepa

Milarepa (c. 1052–c.1135) the famous yogi-poet of Tibet (see V.8), in order to free one of his main disciples from a burdensome relationship, transformed himself into a lame beggar and insistently begged from him a valuable gem he was going to give to the lady. When the man came to realize who the beggar was, Milarepa sang the following song to celebrate the occasion.[253]

Your compassionate act for the infirm was similar to making an offering to the Buddhas of the three times. When you gave the turquoise to the beggar out of compassion, you made that offering to me, Milarepa.

Since every being is one's father and mother,[254] those who discriminate between them are feeding on the deadly poison of ignorance.

All learned monks are in agreement. Those who cling to their own school and dislike others are foolishly wasting their learning.

There is no white and black among Dharma teachings. Fighting and bickering over tenets is abusing the Dharma and cutting the climbing rope to liberation.

All one's happiness comes from others – helping others is the source of one's own happiness, while harming others is a crime against oneself.

'One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa', p.311, trans. T.A.

251 Violation of vow incurring loss of ordination: see V.84.
252 One of the many types of Vajrayāna rituals (see LP p.186.n.31 for a list).
253 See story 57 (Rechungpa's Departure) in HSM pp.637–48.
254 That is, has been one's father or mother in some past life.

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CHAPTER 4

ON SOCIETY AND HUMAN RELIONSHIPS

THERAVĀDA

Good governance

Principles of good governance that ensure the stability of the state *Th.29*

This passage describes the way the Vajjis ran their society. They were known to have had a republican political system different from what had become the widely prevalent monarchical system of India during the time of the Buddha. Buddhist literary sources speak very highly of the Vajjian system of government which had many democratic features. The Buddha's own adherence to similar principles is seen in the system of monastic administration established by him, which leaves no room for authoritative individual leadership, but makes arrangements for a consensual system of administration. The passage is delivered to an emissary of a king who wished to conquer the Vajjis, pointing out their strengths, which made them difficult to conquer.

At that time Venerable Ānanda was standing behind the Blessed One, fanning him, and the Blessed One addressed Venerable Ānanda: 'What have you heard, Ānanda: do the Vajjis meet together regularly, and have frequent meetings?' 'Sir, I have heard that the Vajjis meet together regularly' 'So long, Ānanda, as the Vajjis meet together regularly ... the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline. ... [The Vajjis will also grow and not decline if they continue to] ... meet in unity and disperse in unity and attend to their affairs in concord ... neither enact laws that are not already enacted nor break ones that are already enacted, but proceed in accordance with their ancient Vajjian principles of justice ... are hospitable, respect, honour and venerate their Vajjian elders and think it worthwhile to listen to them ... refrain from abducting women and maidens of good families and oppressing them ... are hospitable, respect honour and venerate their shrines, both those within the city and those outside it, and do not fail in making the due offerings made to them formerly ... provide righteous watch, ward and protection to the arahants, so that those who have not come to the realm yet might do so, and those who have already come might live there at ease.

And the Blessed One addressed the brahmin Vassakāra: 'Once, brahmin, I dwelt at Vesāli, at the Sārandada shrine, and there I taught the Vajjis these seven conditions leading to the prevention of their decline. So long, brahmin, as these seven principles conducive to non-decline remain and prevail among the Vajjis, their growth is to be expected, not their decline.'

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.73–75, trans. P.D.P.

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Th.30 Corrupt leadership and its adverse consequences for society and nature

This is a passage that shows a connection between the ethical conduct of humans and changes that occur in the natural environment. Dhamma as natural order is disrupted by unrighteous actions that go against Dhamma as right ethical order. The passage draws attention to the responsibility of a land's leadership in maintaining moral standards in society through setting an example to the rest of the society.

Monks, at a time when kings are unrighteous, the royal servicemen too become unrighteous. When the royal servicemen become unrighteous, the brahmin householders too become unrighteous. When the brahmin householders become unrighteous, those in the townships and provinces too become unrighteous. When those in the townships and provinces become unrighteous, the moon and sun move unevenly. When the moon and sun move unevenly, the stars and the constellations move unevenly. When the stars and the constellations move unevenly, then the night and day occur unevenly. When the night and day occur unevenly, the fortnights and the months become uneven. When the fortnights and months become uneven, the seasons and the year become uneven. When the seasons and the year become uneven, winds blow unevenly and in the wrong direction. When winds blow unevenly and in the wrong direction, deities become disturbed. When the deities become disturbed, the sky does not bring proper rainfall. When there is no proper rainfall, the grains ripen unevenly. When humans eat unevenly ripened grains, their life-span is shortened, and they lose their beauty and power and are struck by many ailments.

Monks, at a time when kings are righteous ... [the opposite of the above happens].

When cattle are crossing (a water way), if the leading bull goes crooked, all of them go crooked as the leading one has gone crooked.

Even so, among humans, if the one considered the chief behaves unrighteously, all the rest will follow suit.

If the king is unrighteous, the whole country rests unhappily.

When cattle are crossing (a water way), if the leading bull goes straight, all of them go straight as the leading one has gone straight.

Even so, among humans, if the one considered the chief, indeed, lives righteously, all the rest follow suit. If the king is righteous, the whole country rests happily.

Adhammika Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.75–75, trans. P.D.P.

Th.31 Noble duties and the moral qualities of a *Cakkavatti* monarch

These passages are on the ideal of a Cakka-vatti, *a great 'Wheel-turning' monarch whose rule turns its influence over all India (see LI.5). This is presented in the Buddhist canon with a view to providing a sound ethical basis for the political life of society. Since authority was greatly concentrated in a single person in the monarchical system of government that was widely prevalent at the time, Buddhism sought to address the situation by introducing the concept of a monarch who gave up the ambition of military conquest and ruled according to Dhamma, in the sense of righteous, ethical and just principles. The*

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second passage emphasizes that the secular authority of the ruler should always be subject to such principles.

Once, monks, there was a Cakkavatti monarch named Daḷhanemi, a righteous person, a righteous king, conqueror of the four quarters who had achieved the stability of his realm and was possessed of seven treasures ... He lived having conquered this earth extending on all sides to the ocean without resort to rod and sword, but through Dhamma and justice.

Then monks, king Daḷhanemi after many years, after many hundreds of years ... duly installed his eldest son in kingship and, shaving off hair and beard, donned yellow robes and went forth from the household life and became a homeless renunciant. When seven days passed after the royal sage had gone forth, the heavenly Wheel Treasure[255] disappeared. Then a certain person went to the king of the royal class who was anointed as king and said: 'Look here, Lord, do you know that the heavenly Wheel Treasure has disappeared?' ... Then the royal sage said to the anointed king: 'My son, do not be worried and experience displeasure as the heavenly Wheel Treasure has disappeared. The heavenly Wheel Treasure is not a paternal inheritance of yours. Now my son, you must keep to the noble duties of a Cakkavatti monarch. Then it is possible that on the fifteenth day of the moon, the day of religious observances, when you have bathed your head, made the religious observances and ascended the upper storey of the palace, the heavenly Wheel Treasure would appear'

'What Lord, is that noble duty of a Cakkavatti monarch?' 'My son, depending on Dhamma itself, honouring Dhamma, paying respect to Dhamma, esteeming Dhamma, worshipping Dhamma, venerating Dhamma, having Dhamma as the flag, having Dhamma as the banner, having Dhamma as the authority, you should provide righteous watch, ward and protection to people in the royal household, the troops, those of the ruling class, and other subjects who are brahmins, householders of the townships and provinces, to renunciants and brahmins and to beasts and birds. Let there be not within your territory one who acts in an unrighteous manner. Whoever in your territory may be poor, grant them wealth. Whoever in your territory are renunciants and brahmins that refrain from intoxication and heedlessness, established in patience and gentleness – some who discipline themselves, some who calm themselves, some who bring themselves to nirvana – go to them from time to time and ask them and question them: "Sir, what is wholesome, what is unwholesome, what is blameworthy, what is blameless, what should be practised, what should not be practised, and my doing what will conduce to my harm and suffering for a long time, and doing what will conduce to my wellbeing and happiness for a long time?" Having heard from them whatever is unwholesome, you should especially avoid it, and you should observe and live by whatever is wholesome. This, my son, is the noble duty of a Cakkavatti monarch.'

'Alright, Lord', said the anointed king of the royal class to the royal sage, and he fulfilled the duties of a noble Cakkavatti monarch. Fulfill-

255 This symbolizes that a righteous monarch sits on the throne with authority, which authority is secure only as long as he performs his royal duties conscientiously.

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ing the noble duties of a Cakkavatti monarch, on the fifteenth day of religious observances, bathing his head, and himself undertaking the religious observance, when he ascended the great upper storey of the palace the heavenly Wheel Treasure appeared.

Cakkavatti-sīhanāda Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya III.59–62, trans. P.D.P.

'Monks, whoever be that righteous Cakkavatti monarch, he too does not turn the wheel without a ruler.' When this was said, a certain monk said thus to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, who is the ruler of the righteous Cakkavatti monarch that rules righteously?' The Blessed One said: 'Monk, it is Dhamma.'

Dhamma-rājā Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya, III.149, trans. P.D.P.

Peace, violence and crime

Th.32 Poverty and disparity in wealth as a cause of social unrest and breakdown of morality in society

This narrative shows the relationship between morality and the economic conditions of the people. It points out that a major cause for the gradual deterioration of morality is poverty, economic disparity, and destitution. It also shows that it is through the revival of moral standards in society that a prosperous social order can be restored. It is presented initially as a tale of the distant past, but it then extends into the distant future, when the next Buddha, Metteyya, the Kindly One, will come (though such a future golden age will itself decline, in time). It includes the idea that human life-span fluctuates in proportion with overall morality.

Then the king made them all assemble and questioned them about the noble duties of a Cakkavatti monarch. They disclosed those to him. Having heard from them he made arrangements for the righteous watch, ward and protection (of citizens and animals), but did not provide wealth to those deprived of it. When wealth was not provided to those deprived of it, poverty became rife. When poverty became rife, a certain person took what was not given, committing what was considered to be theft. They arrested him and brought him before the king, reporting the matter to him. The king questioned him on whether he had committed ... theft, and he said: 'Yes Lord, it is true.' The king asked why he did so, and he said: 'Lord, I have no means of living.' Then the king provided him with wealth and told him: 'Look here, my man, with this wealth, sustain yourself, feed your parents, wife and children, invest it in industry, make gifts to renunciants and brahmins which will be rewarding and having pleasant consequences conducive to heavenly rebirth.' That man replied 'Alright, Lord.'

Another person, too, committed ... theft ... The king provided him also with wealth ... Monks, the people heard, 'Whoever takes things belonging to others without being given to them, and commit what is considered to be theft, to them, the king provides wealth.' Having heard this, it occurred to them: 'We also should take what is not given and commit what is considered to be theft.' Then a certain person committed ... theft. They arrested him and took him before the king ... Then this idea occurred to the king: 'If I keep providing wealth to everyone

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who commits ... theft, in this way thefts will increase. I should punish him with proper punishment. I should cut him off at the root. I should chop off his head.'

So the king commanded his men: 'Bind this man with strong ropes with his arms behind him, shave his head, and lead him through the streets and junctions, to the rough sound of the beat of a drum, take him out through the southern gate, and to the south of the city, give him the proper punishment, cut him off at the root, chop off his head'. They bound him with strong ropes ... and chopped off his head.

People heard that whoever ... commits ... theft, his head is chopped off, and thought: 'We should also make sharp weapons, and we shall effectively eliminate those whose things we steal (so they cannot be witnesses against us), cut them off at the root, chop off their heads'. They made sharp weapons and attempted to murder people in the villages, townships, and cities. They attempted to commit highway robbery, and they effectively eliminated those whose things they stole, cut them off at the root, chopped off their heads.

In this way, monks, when those deprived of wealth were not being provided with wealth, poverty became rife; when poverty became rife, stealing increased; when stealing increased, weapons increased; when weapons increased, destruction of life increased; when destruction of life increased, the life-span of those living beings waned, and their beauty also waned. When they were waning in their life-span and their beauty, the sons of men who had a life-span of eighty thousand years came to have a life-span of forty-thousand years ... [Further declines in morality, and consequent reductions in human life-span are then described.]

There will be a time monks, when the children of these people will be of a life-span of ten years. ... the ten courses of wholesome conduct will completely disappear and the ten courses of unwholesome conduct[256] will excessively prevail. For those of ten years life-span, even the word 'wholesome' will not be there. How could there be a doer of wholesome deeds? ... Among people of ten years life-span, there will be intense mutual anger, intense malice, intense envious thoughts, intense thoughts of killing, even of mother towards children ... For people of ten years life-span there will be a weapons-period of seven days. They will perceive each other as beasts. Sharp weapons will appear in their hands and with those sharp weapons they will kill each other saying: 'this is a beast', 'this is a beast'.

Then monks, this idea will occur to some among those beings: 'Let us not kill anyone, and let not anyone kill us. Let us resort to grassy thickets, forest thickets, places covered thickly with trees, inaccessible rivers, uneven mountains, and live on roots and fruits of forest trees'. They will do so and at the end of seven days they will come out of those resorts and rejoice and console each other, hugging one another, saying: 'We see good beings who survived; we see good beings who survived!' Then this thought will occur to those beings: 'It was due to our pursuit of unwholesome practices that such wide destruction of our

256 See passage Th.111.

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relatives occurred. We should practise wholesome acts. And what wholesome practices should we adopt? We should abstain from destruction of life, and live observing this wholesome practice'. They will ... observe this wholesome practice. Due to observing this wholesome practice their life-span will increase ...

When people are (again) of a life-span of eighty thousand years, this Varanasi will be a kingdom known as Ketumatī ... prosperous and plentiful in food ... (and) a king named Saṅkha will be born, a Cakkavatti monarch, a righteous king guided by Dhamma ... Then a Blessed One named Metteyya will be born in the world, an arahant, a perfectly awakened Buddha ... like myself born here at this time.

Cakkavatti-sīhanāda Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya III.64–76, trans. P.D.P.

Th.33 Responsibility of the state to ensure the economic well-being of its citizens

This passage illustrates the skilful way in which the Buddha taught, and conveys the message that, as poverty leads to social disruption, a wise ruler should act to prevent this. The setting is that the brahmin Kūṭadanta, who wishes to offer a great sacrifice, goes to the Buddha as he has heard (oddly!) that the Buddha can advise on how to conduct a sacrifice. The Buddha gives his advice by way of the following story of a prosperous king who wished to conduct a great sacrifice to ensure his future well-being and happiness, and who asked his brahmin chaplain how to do this.

Thereupon, the brahmin chaplain said to King Mahā-vijita: 'Sir, Your Majesty's country is beset with problems and oppression. Dacoits who pillage the villages, townships, and cities and highway robbers are to be seen. When the country is beset with problems and oppression, if the king were to levy a tax, your majesty would be doing what ought not to be done. It might occur to Your Majesty: "I'll eradicate this strong body of the robbers by inflicting execution, imprisonment, deprivation, degradation and banishment!" But the strong body of the robbers cannot be satisfactorily eradicated in that manner. The remnant left after execution would still go on harassing Your Majesty's realm. However, by adopting this action-plan, this obstruction of the rebels will be satisfactorily eradicated. Therefore, Your Majesty, whosoever there be in Your Majesty's realm making an effort to engage in agriculture and animal husbandry, to them let His Majesty the king give food and seed-corn. Whosoever there be in Your Majesty's realm making an effort to engage in trade, to them let His Majesty the king provide capital. Whosoever there be in Your Majesty's realm making an effort to engage in royal service, to them let His Majesty the king give wages and food. Then those men, engaging each in his own business, will no longer harass the realm, and the king's revenue will go up; the country will be secured and not beset with problems and oppression. The people, pleased and happy, dancing their children in their arms, will dwell with open doors.'

King Mahā-vijita accepted the word of his chaplain, and did as he had said. And those men engaged each in his business, harassed the king's realm no more. The king's revenue went up and the country was secured and not beset with problems and oppression. The people being pleased and happy, dancing their children in their arms, dwelt with open doors.

Kūṭadanta Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.135–136, trans. P.D.P.

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Causes for social and family conflict *Th.34*

The first of these passages highlights envy and miserliness as causes of ill-will and conflict in communities, whether human or divine, such as those of nāga *snake-deities and* gandhabba *heavenly musicians. The second highlights attachment to sensual pleasures as a cause of conflict.*

'Sir, due to what fetter do gods, humans, nāgas, gandhabbas and whatever other different communities there are, in spite of the thought "Let us live without hatred, without taking sticks, without enmity, without malice, free from hate", live with hatred, taking sticks, with enmity, with malice and not free from hatred?' So did Sakka, the king of gods question the Blessed One.

When so questioned the Blessed One explained to him thus: 'It is due to being fettered by envy and miserliness that gods, humans ... live with hatred, taking sticks, with enmity'

Sakka-pañha Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.276, trans. P.D.P.

Further monks, with sensual pleasures as the cause and the source, the basis, the cause being simply sensual pleasures, kings dispute with kings, people of the ruling class with people of the ruling class, brahmins with brahmins, householders with householders, mother disputes with the son, the son with the mother, the father with the son, the son with the father, brother with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. They dispute, quarrel, and fight each other with hands, clods, sticks, weapons, and herein they meet with death, and also deadly pain.

Mahā-dukkha-kkhandha Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.86, trans. P.D.P.

War, peace and reconciliation *Th.35*

This pair of passages show armed conflict to bring frustration and further conflict, especially if one is not magnanimous in 'victory'. In the first, the Buddha comments on the report that King Ajātasattu had attacked King Pasenadi, who had withdrawn in defeat.

Monks, King Ajātasattu of Magadha has evil friends, evil associates, and evil companions. King Pasenadi Kosala has good friends, good associates, and good companions. Tonight the defeated king Pasenadi Kosala will lie unhappily.

Victory breeds enmity, the defeated lie unhappily,
The one at peace lies happily, giving up victory and defeat.

Then many monks ... came to the Blessed One, paid respect to him, sat on one side and said: 'Venerable sir, King Ajātasattu of Magadha, ... advanced towards Kāsi for battle against King Pasenadi Kosala. ... King Pasenadi Kosala defeated King Ajātasattu of Magadha and captured him alive. Then this thought occurred to King Pasenadi Kosala: "Even though King Ajātasattu ... betrays me who does not betray (him), he is my nephew. What if I were to capture his entire array of elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers and dismiss him alive?" Then King Pasenadi Kosala, captured ... the entire array of elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers of King Ajātasattu ... and dismissed him alive.'

The Blessed One, having understood the situation uttered these verses on that occasion:

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A person plunders indeed in the way he thinks fit, and when others plunder, the plundered, too, plunder.

The fool thinks it's alright, until evil bears fruit. When evil bears fruit, the fool comes to sorrow.

The killer gets (in turn) a killer, the victor (in turn) will get a victor.

He that abuses, (in turn) will get abuse, and an offender an offender (in turn).

So with the action that comes around the plundered one plunders.

First and second *Saṅgāma Suttas: Saṃyutta-nikāya* I.83–85 <189–193>,[257] trans. P.D.P.

Th.36 The power of patience and non-anger

The first passage, also set in a conflict situation, advises calm and patience in the face of angry provocation. This is not weakness, but real strength, of benefit to oneself and those one is in conflict with. The second passage succinctly expresses the power of this kind of response.

In that war the gods won and the demi-gods were defeated. Then the gods of the Thirty-three, binding Vepacitti, the king of the demi-gods (in five places of the body) with his neck as the fifth brought him to the Sudhammā assembly, to Sakka, the king of gods. There, Vepacitti, the king of demi-gods ... when Sakka, the king of gods was entering and exiting the Sudhammā assembly, was abusing and insulting him with foul and harsh words.

Monks, then Mātalī, the charioteer questioned Sakka, the king of gods thus in verse: 'Is it out of fear or out of weakness that Sakka endures hearing harsh words in the face of Vepacitti?'

Sakka: 'It is neither due to fear nor due to weakness that I am patient with Vepacitti. How could a wise person like me engage with a fool?'

Mātalī: 'Fools get increasingly aggressive when there is none to put a stop to this. Therefore, let the wise person resist the fool with exceedingly effective punishment.'

Sakka: 'I consider this itself as resistance against the fool, that is, having known that the other person is angered, one mindfully keeps one's calm.'

Mātalī: 'Vāsava, I see a fault in this very act of patience. When the fool imagines, "through fear of me he is patient", the stupid one becomes more aggressive like the bull that chases the person who flees.'

Sakka: 'Let him imagine or not "It is through fear of me that he is patient". There exists no greater gain than patience: that is of the highest benefit to oneself.

He who being strong really is patient towards the weak, that patience is called the supreme, for the weak person is always patient.

They call that power no power at all, the power that is the power of a fool. There is no one to resist the power of him who is guarded by Dhamma.

It is really worse for him who responds in anger to one who is an-

257 The Pāli Text Society has two editions of volume one of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*. The first paginations given for passages from it in this book are from the earlier version, and the ones in < > brackets are to the later one.

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gered. One who does not show anger towards the angered wins a battle that is difficult to win.

He who, having known that the other person has been angered, mindfully keeps his calm, conducts himself for the well-being of both himself and the other.

The person who heals both himself and the other: those people who think him a fool are not proficient in Dhamma.'

Vepacitti Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.221–222 <475–479>, trans. P.D.P.

Conquer the angry by non-anger; conquer the bad by goodness; conquer the miser by generosity, and the liar by truth.

Dhammapada 223, trans. P.H.

Wealth and economic activity

Craving for riches brings ruin ***Th.37***

Riches destroy the foolish, but not those seeking the Beyond.
By craving for riches, the fool destroys himself as he would others.

Dhammapada 355, trans. P.H.

Do not be blind in one eye ***Th.38***

This passage sees the best, and happiest, kind of layperson as one with an eye to both profit and ethics.

Monks, there are these three kinds of persons found existing in the world. What three? The blind, the one-eyed, and the two-eyed.

What, monks, is blind person? Here, a certain person lacks the kind of eye with which to acquire wealth not yet acquired and increase already acquired wealth, and he also lacks the kind of eye with which to know wholesome and unwholesome qualities, blameworthy and blameless qualities, inferior and superior qualities, dark and bright qualities with their counterparts. This is called the blind person.

What, monks, is one-eyed person? Here, a certain person has the kind of eye with which to acquire wealth ... but he lacks the kind of eye with which to know wholesome and unwholesome qualities ...

What, monks, is two-eyed person? Here, a certain person has the kind of eye with which to acquire wealth ... and he also has the kind of eye with which to know wholesome and unwholesome qualities ...

The two-eyed is declared the best kind of person. His wealth is acquired by his own exertion, with goods that are righteously gained.

Andha Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.128–129, trans. P.H.

A happy life comes from industriousness, appropriate guarding of possessions, friendship with the good, and wise use of money ***Th.39***

This passage explains what kinds of behaviour bring happiness in this and the next life for ordinary laypeople involved in life's pleasures.

Byagghapajja, these four things are conducive to the wellbeing and happiness of a child of good family in this immediate life. What four? Achievement by industry, achievement by protection, friendship with the good and balanced living.

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Byagghapajja, what is achievement by industry? Here, Byagghapajja, by whatever occupation a child of good family makes a livelihood, whether farming, trading, cattle rearing, archery, royal service or any other profession, he becomes skilled, not lethargic, and is possessed of proper judgment and understanding of means regarding what needs to be done and what needs to be organized. Byagghapajja, this is the achievement by industry.

Byagghapajja, what is the achievement by protection? Here, Byagghapajja, whatever wealth there is to the child of good family achieved through industrious effort, righteously earned through his own labour, the sweat of his brow, he arranges for its ward and protection (thinking): 'My wealth should not be carried away by the king, by robbers, it should not be burnt by fire, carried away by floodwaters or by unloved inheritors'. Byagghapajja, this is the achievement by protection.

Byagghapajja, what is friendship with the good? Here, Byagghapajja, in whatever village or hamlet the child of good family lives, there may be householders or children of householders, those young people developed in ethical discipline, or those old people developed in ethical discipline, those endowed with faith, endowed with ethical discipline, generosity and wisdom. He stays with them, talks with them and discusses with them. He trains himself in accordance with the achievement in faith of those endowed with faith, the achievement in ethical discipline of those endowed with ethical discipline, the achievement in generosity of those endowed with generosity, and the achievement in wisdom of those endowed with wisdom. Byagghapajja this is friendship with the good.

Byagghapajja, what is balanced living? Here, Byagghapajja, the child of good family having known his income and expenditure, lives neither in an extravagant manner nor in a miserly manner, but adopts a balanced style of living, considering: 'So shall my income exceed my expenditure and my expenditure not exceed my income.' Like one holding the balance or one who is the apprentice of one holding the balance would know, this side is more by this much and this side is less by this much, in the same way the child of good family, having known his income and expenditure, lives neither in an extravagant manner nor in a miserly manner, but adopts a balanced style of living ... Byagghapajja, when the child of good family, having known his income and expenditure, ... adopts a balanced style of living it is called balanced living.

Byagghapajja, to wealth thus arisen there are four sources of loss. They are addiction to women, intoxicants, gambling and having evil friends, associates, and intimates. Just as, Byagghapajja, to a great reservoir there are four inlets and four outlets and a man closes up the inlets and opens the outlets; rain, too, does not fall abundantly. If this happens, wasting away could be expected to the reservoir, not growth. In the same manner, to arisen wealth there are four sources of loss ...

Byagghapajja, to wealth thus arisen there are four sources of gain as non-addiction to women, intoxicants, gambling, and having friends, associates, and intimates who are good. Just as, Byagghapajja, to a great reservoir there are four inlets and four outlets. A man opens the inlets and closes up the outlets; rain too falls abundantly. If this happens

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growth could be expected to the reservoir, not wasting away. In the same manner to arisen wealth there are four sources of gain ...

Byagghapajja, those four things are conducive to the well-being and happiness of a child of good family here and now. Byagghapajja, these four things are conducive to the well-being and happiness of a child of good family hereafter. What four? Achievement in faith, in ethical discipline, in generosity, and in wisdom.

Byagghapajja, what is achievement in faith? Here, the child of good family has faith in the awakening of the Tathāgata, 'The Blessed One, arahant, perfectly awakened Buddha ...'[258]

Byagghapajja, what is the achievement in ethical discipline? Here, Byagghapajja, the child of good family abstains from destroying life ... from taking drinks that lead to intoxication and heedless behaviour ... Byagghapajja, this is achievement in ethical discipline.[259]

Byagghapajja, what is the achievement in generosity? Here, Byagghapajja, the child of good family lives in the household with a mind free from the stain of miserliness, extending generosity, delighting in relinquishment, with pure hands (ready to give), ready to comply with the requests of the needy and delighting in sharing through liberality. Byagghapajja, this is the achievement in generosity.

Byagghapajja, what is the achievement in wisdom? Here, a child of good family is endowed with wisdom, with the noble and penetrative insight into arising and passing away that rightfully leads to the destruction of suffering. Byagghapajja, this is achievement in wisdom.

Byagghapajja Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya IV.281–285, trans. P.D.P.

How to live ethically and not waste one's resources *Th.40*

This passage sees an ethical life, avoidance of negative mental states, and avoidance of such things as idleness and drunkenness, as all aids to happiness in this life and the next life.

To the extent, young householder, that the four defilements of action are abandoned by the disciple of the noble one, and that person commits no evil action in four ways, does not associate with the six sources of loss of wealth, they, moving away from fourteen evil things, cover the six quarters[260] and enter the path leading to victory in both worlds: they have succeeded in this world and in the world beyond. Upon the dissolution of the body after death they are born in a happy heavenly world.

What are the four defilements of action that have been abandoned? The destruction of life, householder, is a defilement of action, and so are taking what is not given, wrongful conduct in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures[261] and lying. These are the four vices that they have abandoned.

... In which four ways does a person commit no evil action? Committing an evil action through favour ... through hatred ... through delusion ... or through fear ...

258 As in Th.1.

259 That is, he follows the five ethical precepts, as in passage Th.110.

260 See Th.49.

261 Sexual misconduct such as adultery.

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What are the six channels for loss of wealth not to be associated with? Indulging in substances that cause intoxication and heedlessness; sauntering in streets at unseemly hours; frequenting parties; indulgence in gambling that causes heedlessness; association with evil friends; giving oneself to idleness.

Sigālovāda Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya III.181–184, trans. P.D.P.

Th.41 Being generous and respectful brings a happy family and social environment

This passage urges people to use their ethically-generated income to support family members and be generous to employees, neighbours, deities, and priests and renunciants.

In whatever son of good family, Mahānāma, these five qualities are evident – whether it is a head-anointed king of the ruling class, or a countryman inheriting parental wealth, or a general of the army, or a headman of a village, or a head of a guild, or one having authoritative control in a particular family – growth should be expected, not decline. What five?

Here Mahānāma, with the righteous wealth he has earned righteously by aroused effort, toiling with his hands, with sweat dripping, he acts hospitably towards his mother and father, shows them honour, respects them and makes offerings to them. The mother and father, when treated hospitably, shown honour, respected and provided with offerings, are compassionate towards him with a good heart and wish him, 'May you be long lived, may you safeguard your life for a long time!' Growth and not decline can be expected for the son of good family to whom the compassion of the mother and father has been extended.

Further, Mahānāma, with the wealth he has earned ethically ... he acts hospitably towards his wife and children, servants, workmen, shows them honour ... Wife and children ..., when treated hospitably, ... are compassionate towards him ... Growth and not decline can be expected for the son of good family to whom the compassion of wife and children ... has been extended.

Further, Mahānāma, with the wealth he has earned ethically ... he acts hospitably towards the people in the fields and workplaces in the neighbourhood. The people in the fields and workplaces in the neighbourhood, when treated hospitably ... are compassionate towards him ... Growth and not decline could be expected for the son of good family to whom the compassion of the people in the fields and workplaces in the neighbourhood has been extended.

Further Mahānāma, with the wealth he has earned ethically ... he acts hospitably towards the deities who accept offerings. The deities ... when treated hospitably ... are compassionate towards him ... Growth and not decline could be expected for the son of good family to whom the compassion of the deities ... has been extended.

Further, Mahānāma, with the wealth he has earned ethically ... he acts hospitably towards renunciants and brahmins. The renunciants and brahmins, when treated hospitably, are compassionate towards him ... Growth and not decline could be expected for the son of good family to whom the compassion of the renunciants and brahmins ... has

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been extended. ... Doing his duty towards mother and father, he is always bent on the welfare of wife and children. He is committed to the well-being of the people within the household and (his) dependants.

For the wellbeing of both, for departed former relatives as well as for those living here and now, he is bountiful and is virtuous.

The wise person, dwelling ethically in the household, is a producer of wealth for renunciants, brahmins and the deities.

He, having done good, becomes honoured and praised. Here itself they praise him and hereafter he rejoices in heaven.

Licchavi-kumāra Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya III.76–78, trans. P.D.P.

Four praiseworthy aspects of making and using wealth *Th.42*

For a layperson, this passage praises ethical wealth-making, using wealth to make oneself happy, to make others happy, which generates beneficial karma, and not being attached to wealth.

Therein, headman, the one enjoying sensual pleasures who seeks wealth ethically, without violence; who (with this wealth) makes themselves happy and pleased; who shares it and does karmically beneficial deeds (with it); and who uses wealth without being tied to it, uninfatuated with it, not blindly absorbed in it, seeing the danger in it, understanding that which is the escape (from it): he may be praised on (these) four grounds.

Rāsiya Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.336–337, trans. P.H.

Contentment as wealth *Th.43*

This short verse implies that contentment brings a sense of being well off.

Health is the highest gain, contentment is the greatest wealth.
A trustworthy friend is the best kinsman. Nirvana is the highest bliss.

Dhammapada 204, trans. P.D.P.

Social equality

There is no superiority simply due to social class; moral conduct is what counts *Th.44*

This passage critiques the idea that members of the brahmin hereditary class of pre-Buddhist priests are naturally superior and descended from Brahmā, seen by brahmins as the creator-deity. They are born from human mothers, like everyone else, and like members of the other three social classes of ancient India, they can act both unethically and ethically. What is truly worthy of respect, even from kings, is not birth but living according to Dhamma: justly, ethically, with wholesome actions, words and states of mind. The passage ends with a passage at Th.4, highlighting the Buddha's true followers as born from the Dhamma he teaches and embodies, equivalent to 'Brahmā' in the sense of what is truly the best of all things.

Then the Blessed One addressed (his disciple) Vāseṭṭha. 'Vāseṭṭha, you have here gone forth from home to homelessness and become renunciants from the brahmin class, from the brahmin high rank, from families of brahmins. Vāseṭṭha; do not the brahmins accuse you and insult you?'

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'Surely, sir, the brahmins accuse us, insult us to their heart's content with complete, not incomplete insults. Sir, the brahmins say thus: "Only the brahmins are of the highest (social) class. Other social groups are inferior. Only the brahmins are of white colour; others are of black colour. Only brahmins become pure; not non-brahmins. Only brahmins are the legitimate sons of Brahmā, born of his mouth. They are Brahmā-born, Brahmā-created, inheritors of Brahmā. You have abandoned the highest rank and gone into the lower rank, that is, these shavelings, renunciants, the menial, the black, those originated from the feet of (our) kinsman (Brahmā)." Sir, this is how the brahmins accuse us ... '.

'Surely, Vāseṭṭha, the brahmins say this because they do not remember their past ... It is evident, Vāseṭṭha that the brahmin women have their seasons, become pregnant, deliver, and breast-feed. And (yet) those brahmins being persons who are surely born of wombs say this: "brahmins are of the highest class ... are Brahmā-born."

Vāseṭṭha, there are these four classes: rulers, brahmins, tradesmen and labourers. Sometimes, Vāseṭṭha, a person of the ruling class is someone who destroys living beings, takes what is not given, misbehaves with regard to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, lies, use harsh speech, divisive speech, idle chatter, has intense desire, is malicious in thought, is of wrong views. It is seen that even a ruler engages in these things that are unwholesome, reckoned as unwholesome, blameworthy, reckoned as blameworthy, ought not to be practised, reckoned as what ought not to be practised, not in keeping with what is noble, reckoned as what is not in keeping with what is noble, dark and of dark consequence, censured by the wise. Sometimes, Vāseṭṭha, even a brahmin, or a tradesman, or a labourer is someone who destroys living beings ... It is seen that even a brahmin ... engages in these things that are unwholesome, reckoned as unwholesome ...

Sometimes, Vāseṭṭha, even a ruler abstains from destroying the life of living beings, taking what is not given ... It is seen that even a ruler ... engages in these things that are wholesome ... praised by the wise [and likewise with members of the other classes].

When among these four classes are to be found a mixture of both things dark and white, what is censured by the wise as well as praised by the wise, what the brahmins say here: "Brahmins are of the highest class, other classes are inferior ...", this, the intelligent people do not approve of. What is the reason for that? Vāseṭṭha, out of these four classes, whoever is a monk, an arahant with intoxicating inclinations destroyed, who has lived the good life, done what ought to be done, laid aside the burden, attained to well-being, eradicated the fetter (of attachment to) ways of being, liberated with right gnosis, he is called the highest among them; and that is in terms of Dhamma, not in terms of non-Dhamma. Dhamma is the greatest among these people both in this immediate life and in the life after. In this way too, Vāseṭṭha it should be known how Dhamma alone is the greatest among these people in this immediate life and in the life hereafter.

Vāseṭṭha, King Pasenadi Kosala knows that the renunciant Gotama is unsurpassed, and that he became a renunciant from the family of the Sakyas. Sakyans do regularly obey the commands of King Pasenadi Kos-

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ala. The Sakyans show respect, do salutation, offer a seat, do respectful salutation, pay homage to King Pasenadi Kosala. Vāseṭṭha, whatever showing of respect, doing of salutation ... the Sakyans perform to King Pasenadi Kosala, similar respect is shown by him ... to the Tathāgata (a Sakyan). And does he do so thinking: "Isn't it indeed the case that renunciant Gotama is well-born, I am ill-born; renunciant Gotama is powerful, I am weak; renunciant Gotama is good looking, I am not of good appearance; renunciant Gotama is of great standing, I am of small standing?' ('No'). But it is due to respecting, honouring, paying respect to, worshipping, paying homage to Dhamma itself that King Pasenadi Kosala shows respect to the Tathāgata. In this way also Vāseṭṭha, it should be known that among these people, Dhamma alone is the greatest both in this immediate life and in the life hereafter.

Vāseṭṭha, you indeed are persons who have gone forth from home to homelessness from various classes, various names, various clans, various communities and become renunciants. And when you are questioned who you are, you should reply: "We are renunciants, who are sons of the Sakyan (teacher)."'

Aggañña Sutta: *Dīgha-nikāya* III.81–84, trans. P.D.P.

People of all backgrounds are equal in their potential; social divisions among them are conventional *Th.45*

In this passage, the brahmin Vāseṭṭha figures again, probably before becoming a disciple of the Buddha. He expresses the view that action, not birth, is what counts in being a 'brahmin' in the sense of a person of genuine ethical superiority. His fellow brahmin, Bhāradvāja, holds that purity of descent is what makes a person a real brahmin. They go to the Buddha to ask which view he agrees with. The Buddha says action is what matters. He emphasizes that while plants and animals have differences according to their species, humans are one species, not divided into four types according to the class they are born into. Class differences are merely conventional labels based on mode of livelihood.

Vāseṭṭha I will say in accordance with truth about the classification of those living things according to species. Species indeed are various.

You would know this in respect of the grass and trees: although they would not make a claim, they have the mark of their species. The species indeed are various.

So also in respect of insects, grasshoppers and ants; they have the mark of their species ...

You would know in respect of four-footed ones, small and large, that they have the mark of their species ...

Also you would know in respect of those with long backs using their bellies as their feet (snakes) that they have the mark of their species ...

Then you would know in respect of fish too, aquatic, living in water that they have the mark of their species ...

Then you would know in respect of birds too who fly in the air borne by their wings that they have the mark of their species ...

As among these species there are separate marks of their species, there is *not* among humans separate species-marks.

Neither in the hair, nor in the head, the ears, the eyes, the mouth, the nose, the lips the eyelashes,

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In the neck, the flanks, the stomach, the back, in the womb, the chest, the pudendum, in sexual intercourse,

In the hands, feet, fingers nor nails, nor in the thighs and calves, nor in the hue[262] or voice are there (differing) species-marks as among other species.

In the individual bodies of humans, these are not evident. Designations with regard to humans are used according to conventions.

Among humans, whoever makes a livelihood by looking after cattle, Vāseṭṭha, know that he is (by that) a farmer, not a brahmin.[263]

Among humans, whoever makes a livelihood by some craft, Vāseṭṭha, know that he is a craftsman, not a brahmin.

Among humans, whoever makes a livelihood by trading, Vāseṭṭha, know that he is a merchant, not a brahmin. ...

[Parallel points are made about workmen, robbers, soldiers, sacrificial priests, and kings.]

I do not call one a brahmin because of his maternal origin or his breed. He may be addressed as 'sir' but be a man of attachment.

He who does not become agitated, having cut off all fetters, such a person who has overcome all impurity, released from bondage, I call a brahmin. ...

The name and clan conceived in the world is mere convention. Such conception in various contexts has come about due to common agreement.

For those lacking in understanding, dogmatic belief has been lying latent. They without understanding tell us, 'One becomes a brahmin by birth'.

One becomes neither a brahmin nor a non-brahmin by birth. One becomes a brahmin and a non-brahmin by action.

Vāseṭṭha Sutta: Sutta-nipāta p.115 and vv.594–621 and 648–650, trans. P.D.P.

The equality of men and women

In this section we have included only canonical passages that show a favourable attitude towards women. However, there are other passages that represent the prevailing discriminative attitudes of the time. It is possible that such seeming contradictory attitudes are expressed in some instances in the literature due to editorial handling over many centuries. Some of the Brahmanical attitudes that were dominant in early Indian society may have found their way into the Buddhist canonical literature itself, although in other passages, of which instances are given below, a clearly reformatory attitude of the Buddha regarding the issue of gender is represented.

Th.46 Subtle elevation of the status of women

In this passage, the Buddha undermines the idea of the lesser status of females in the society of his time, though in a skilful way that appeals to some existing values and avoids a direct challenge.

262 The difference in colour has in this instance been ignored.

263 That is, simply by doing any particular occupation, one is not thereby a true brahmin, though if one is free from moral defilements, one may be.

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King Pasenadi Kosala approached the Blessed One, paid respect to him and sat on one side. Then a certain person approached King Pasenadi Kosala and whispered in his ear that Queen Mallikā had given birth to a daughter. Hearing this, King Pasenadi Kosala, became displeased.

The Blessed One, knowing the displeasure of King Pasenadi Kosala, uttered at that time these verses:

'Some woman too may be better than a man if she is intelligent, virtuous, respectful towards the mother-in-law and is faithful to her husband.

Those born to her will be heroes and district leaders, the son of such a good wife might even rule as a king.'

Dhītā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.86 <194>, trans. P.D.P.

Women's equal potential for wisdom and awakening *Th.47*

In this passage, Māra, the evil one is made to represent the wrong notion that dominated social perceptions about women during the time that Buddhism emerged. The expression 'two-finger-wisdom' is used to suggest that women have very little intelligence. The commentarial tradition explains the expression in two different ways. According to the Saṃyutta-nikāya *commentary, the common notion was that women's understanding is limited to the use of two fingers in weaving threads with cotton wool. According to the* Therīgāthā *commentary, although women cook rice from the age of seven or eight, in order to know whether the rice is properly cooked, they have to take the boiling rice with a spoon and press it with two fingers to know whether it is cooked.*

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika in Jetavana in Sāvatthī. Then the nun Somā, putting on robes in the morning and taking bowl and robes, entered Sāvatthī for the alms-round. Going on the alms-round and after the meal, she approached the Andha forest and sat at the root of a tree to find (meditative) seclusion. Then Māra, the evil one, desiring to frighten the nun Somā, approached her and uttered this verse:

'That difficult to achieve state, which should be achieved by sages, women, with the two-finger-wisdom, cannot achieve.'

Then it occurred to the nun Somā, 'Who is it that utters this verse, is it a human or non-human?' Then nun Somā thought: 'it is Māra the evil one, desiring to frighten me and disturb me in my seclusion who has uttered this verse.' And the nun Somā, knowing it was Māra the evil one, replied with this verse:

'Why should being a woman matter when the mind is well composed, understanding is present and for whom there is proper insight into the Dhamma?

Māra, it is fit for you to say this to someone who thinks in terms of "I am man", or "I am woman" or in some such terms.'

Then Māra the evil one thinking: 'The nun Somā knows me', displeased, disappeared there itself.

Somā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.129 <283–284>, trans. P.D.P.

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Th.48 Demonstration of a woman's spiritual powers

This passage concerns Mahā-pajāpatī Gotamī, the Buddha's aunt who became his step-mother, and who helped persuade him to grant ordination to women (see Th.220). After becoming the first Buddhist nun, she went on to attain awakening as an arahant. *Here the Buddha urges her, now 120, to demonstrate her spiritual powers, so as to challenge people's doubts as to women's abilities. Other parts of the passage, not given here, mention her numerous other feats of meditation-based supernormal power.*

(Gotamī:) 'That state (nirvana) which is not seen by elderly non-Buddhist teachers

Is experienced by some good (Buddhist) young girls of seven years. ...'

(The Buddha:) 'Gotamī, in order to dispel the dogmatic view of those who entertain doubt about the realization of Dhamma by women, do display (your) supernormal powers.'

Then having bowed to the perfectly awakened Buddha, plunging into the sky, Gotamī displayed numerous supernormal powers with the sanction of the Buddha.

Having become one she became many, and having become many she became one. She appeared, disappeared, went through walls, through mountains.

Without obstruction she went and even dived into the ground

Like on the earth she walked on water without sinking.

Getting herself into a posture she moved in the sky like a female bird.

She exercised the range of her bodily power as far as the abode of Brahmā.

She made (mount) Sineru the shaft, and made the great earth a parasol and turning it from the bottom and holding it she walked about in the sky.

She set the world up in smoke like at the time of the dawn of six suns and made the world enveloped in a net of garlands like in the end of the great period.

Gotamī Apadāna vv.66 and 79–85: *Apadāna* 535–536, trans. P.D.P.

Good human relationships

Th.49 How to have harmonious social relationships with six kinds of people

In this passage, the Buddha gives advice to Sigāla, a layperson who had adopted the practice of paying homage to the six quarters or directions – east, south, west, north, nadir (below) and zenith (above) – as a regular ritual. The Buddha gives a new meaning to this ritual by reinterpreting the directions as kinds of people with whom dutiful mutual relationships should be established: parents, teachers, spouse, friends, employees, and religious guides. Here, parents are the 'east', the direction from which the sun rises. The recommendations are given in the context of the social conditions of the Buddha's day.

'And how, householder, does a disciple of the noble one cover the six quarters? The following should be understood as the six quarters: parents should be understood as the east, teachers as the south, wife and children as the west, friends and associates as the north,

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servants and labourers as the nadir, renunciants and brahmins as the zenith.

In these five ways, householder, a child ought to minister to his parents as the east: "(i) having been supported by them I shall support them, (ii) I shall do what ought to be done for them, (iii) I shall keep the family tradition, (iv) I shall make myself worthy of my inheritance, (v) furthermore, I shall offer alms on their behalf when they are dead and departed."

Householder, when the parents have been ministered to as the east by their children in these five ways, they will in turn show their care for their children in five ways: (i) they will restrain them from evil, (ii) they will get them to be established in the good, (iii) they will get them trained in a craft, (iv) they will get them married to a suitable spouse, (v) at the proper time they will hand over their inheritance to them ... In this manner the east becomes covered, made safe and secure.

In these five ways, householder, a pupil ought to minister to a teacher as the south: (i) by rising from his seat in salutation, (ii) by attending upon the teacher, (iii) by eagerness to learn, (iv) by serving, (v) by properly receiving the instruction pertaining to a craft.

Householder when the teachers have been ministered to as the south by their pupils in these five ways, the teachers will in turn show their care for their pupils in five ways: (i) they will train them well, (ii) they will see that they grasp their lessons well, (iii) they will provide them with complete instruction pertaining to a craft, (iv) they will introduce them to their friends and associates, (v) they will provide for their safety in every quarter ... In this manner the south is covered, made safe and secure.

In these five ways, householder, a husband ought to minister to his wife as the west: (i) by being courteous, (ii) by not showing disrespect, (iii) by not being adulterous, (iv) by handing over authority, (v) by providing her with adornments.

Householder, when the wife is thus ministered to as the west by her husband in these five ways, she in turn shows her care for her husband in five ways: (i) she will perform her work in a well organized way, (ii) she will be hospitable to relations, (iii) she will not be adulterous, (iv) she will protect earnings, (v) she will be skilled and industrious in discharging her duties ... Thus is the west covered by him and made safe and secure.

In these five ways, householder, a son of good family ought to minister to his friends and associates as the north: (i) by liberality, (ii) by endearing speech, (iii) by benevolent behaviour, (iv) by equal treatment, (v) by non-deception.

Householder, when in these five ways the friends and associates have been ministered to as the north, they in turn will show care for him in five ways: (i) they will protect him when he is heedless, (ii) they will protect his property when he is heedless, (iii) they will become a refuge when he is in fear, (iv) they will not forsake him in his troubles, (v) they will show respect to the others in his family ... Thus is the north covered by him and made safe and secure.

In these five ways, householder, a master ought to minister to his servants and labourers as the nadir: (i) by assigning them work according to their ability, (ii) by supplying them with food and wages,

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(iii) by tending them in sickness, (iv) by sharing with them any delicacies, (v) by granting them leave at times.

Householder, when in these five ways the servants and employees have been ministered to as the nadir by their master, they in turn show their care for him in five ways: (i) they rise before him, (ii) they go to sleep after him, (iii) they take only what is given, (iv) they perform their work well, (v) they uphold his good name and reputation ... Thus is the nadir covered by him and made safe and secure.

In these five ways, householder, a son of good family ought to minister to renunciants and brahmins as the zenith: (i) by kindly bodily acts, (ii) by kindly verbal acts, (iii) by kindly thoughts, (iv) by keeping open house to them, (v) by supplying their material needs.

House holder, when the renunciants and brahmins have been ministered to as the zenith by a son of good family in these five ways, they in turn show their care for him in six ways: (i) they restrain him from evil, (ii) they cause him to be established in the good, (iii) they show sympathy towards him with a good heart, (iv) they make him hear what he has not heard, (v) they clarify what he has already heard, (vi) they point out the path to a heavenly state. Thus is the zenith covered by him and made safe and secure.'

Thus spoke the Blessed One. And when the teacher had thus spoken, he spoke yet again: ...

'Charitability, endearing speech, benevolent behaviour, equal treatment, appropriately on the appropriate occasion.

These four forms of benevolence make the world go round, like the linchpin in a moving chariot.

If these in the world exist not, neither mother nor father will receive respect and honour from their children.

Because of these four forms of benevolence the wise discern, to eminence they attain, and praiseworthy they become.'

Sigālovāda Sutta: *Dīgha-nikāya* III.187–193, trans. P.D.P.

Parents and children

Th.50 Repaying one's parents in gratitude for what they have done for one

This passage urges recognition of what we owe our parents, and repaying them in gratitude.

Monks, I say, there are two who cannot easily be repaid (in gratitude). Who are the two? Mother and father. Monks, if you were to bear your father and mother on your shoulders and lived a hundred years and meanwhile rubbed and massaged their bodies as they let loose urine and excreta, you would not yet have repaid them for what they have done for you. Even if you cause them to be established in kingship with power and authority on this earth, along with its plentiful sevenfold gems, even then you will not have returned in terms of gratitude for what they have done for you, because they have done much more. Parents have been guardians of and have fed their children; they have showed them this world.

Monks, whoever causes their parents who lacked faith to participate

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in, to enter into, to become established in the accomplishment of faith, or causes them, if of poor ethical discipline, to participate in ... accomplishment of good ethical discipline, or causes them, if miserly, to participate in ... the accomplishment of liberality, or causes them, if lacking in wisdom, to participate in the accomplishment of wisdom – to that extent, monks, gratitude to your mother and father has been amply shown, shown to a great extent.

Mātā-pitara Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.61–62, trans. P.D.P.

Husband and wife

Moral qualities of married couples *Th.51*

This passage makes clear that either partner in a couple may be a bad person – as if spiritually dead –, or a good person, like a divine being.

Householders, there are four kinds of cohabitation. What four? A dead male lives with a dead female, a dead male lives with a goddess, a god lives with a dead female and a god lives with a goddess.

Householders, how does a dead male live with a dead female? Here, householders, the husband destroys living beings, takes what is not given, engages in wrongful enjoyment of sensual pleasures, tells lies, takes intoxicating drinks; he is not virtuous, lives in the household with a mind overwhelmed by the stain of miserliness, scolds and abuses renunciants and brahmins. The wife does the same. Householders, thus, a dead male lives with a dead female.

Householders, how does a dead male live with a goddess? Here, householders, the husband acts as above. The wife abstains from these bad actions. Householders, thus, a dead male lives with a goddess.

Householders, how does a god live with a dead female? Here, householders the husband abstains from these bad actions. The wife does them. Thus a god lives with a dead female.

Householders, how does a god live with a goddess? Here, householders the husband abstains from these bad actions. The wife does the same. Thus a god lives with a goddess.

Householders, there are these four kinds of cohabitation. ...

If both husband and wife have faith, are charitable, self-controlled and live righteously,
Addressing each other with pleasant words,
Then benefits would be abundant, and are easily produced.
Enemies, of the two with equal ethical discipline, would be unhappy.

Dutiya-saṃvāsa Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.57–59, trans. P.D.P.

A loving couple equal in ethical discipline will be together in the next life *Th.52*

This passage is on a couple of the last of the above four types.

Then the householder Nakulapitā and the housewife Nakulamātā approached the Blessed One, paid respect to him and sat on one side. Then the householder Nakulapitā said this to the Blessed One:

'Venerable sir, from the day I married Nakulamātā when she was young, even when young, I do not know of having committed adultery in relation to her even mentally. How could I physically do so? Vener-

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able sir, we wish to see each other not only here and now, but also in the hereafter.'

Then the housewife, Nakulamātā too said this to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, from the day Nakulapitā married me when I was young, even when young, I do not know of having committed adultery in relation to him even mentally. How could I physically do so? Venerable sir, we wish to see each other not only here and now, but also in the hereafter.'

'Householders, if husband and wife want to see each other not only here and now, but also in the hereafter, they should be endowed with the same measure of faith, ethical discipline, generosity, and wisdom. Then they will see each other both here now and also hereafter.

Both being faithful, understanding, restrained and living righteously they are husband and wife who speak to each other lovingly.

Benefits would be abundant, and are easily produced. Enemies, of the two with equal ethical discipline, would be unhappy.

Having led a righteous life here, those equal in ethical discipline and in dutiful living will be delighted in the heavenly world. They, desiring sensual pleasures will be happy.'

Paṭhama-nakula-samajīvī Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.61–62, trans. P.D.P.

Th.53 A man's wife as his best friend

'What indeed is the wealth of humans, and who indeed is the best friend? ...'

'Children are the wealth of humans, and one's wife is one's best friend.'

Vatthu Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.37 <81>, trans. P.D.P.

Friendship

Th.54 Good and bad friends

This passage is of benefit in helping one to choose one's friends wisely, which is important as friends can have a big influence on one. For the qualities of wise, spiritual friends, see Th.85–8.

These four, householder, should be understood as foes in the guise of friends: he who misappropriates, he who renders lip-service, he who flatters, and he who aids in bringing ruin.

In four ways, householder, should one who misappropriates be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend: (i) he misappropriates things, (ii) for the little he does, he asks much, (iii) he does what ought to be done out of fear, (iv) he associates with one for his own advantage.

In four ways, householder, should one who renders lip-service be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend: (i) he speaks of benefits he could have bestowed in the past, (ii) he speaks of benefits he might bestow in the future, (iii) he speaks of a senseless benefit he is ready to bestow, (iv) with regard to what ought to be done in the present, he shows his own misfortune.

In four ways, householder, should one who flatters be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend: (i) he approves his friend's evil, (ii) he does not approve of his friend's good deeds, (iii) he speaks in praise of him in his presence, (iv) he speaks ill of him in the presence of others.

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In four ways, householder, should one who aids in bringing ruin be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend: (i) he is a companion in indulging in intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness, (ii) he is a companion in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours, (iii) he is a companion in frequenting parties, (iv) he is a companion in indulging in gambling, which causes heedlessness.

These four, householder, should be understood as good-hearted friends: (i) he who is a helpmate, (ii) he who is the same in happiness and sorrow, (iii) he who gives good counsel, and (iv) he who sympathizes.

In four ways, householder, should a helpmate be understood as a good-hearted friend: (i) he guards him when he has become heedless, (ii) he protects his wealth when he has become heedless, (iii) he becomes a refuge when he is in fear, (iv) he provides him with double the supply needed when there are matters to be attended to.

In four ways, householder, should one who is the same in happiness and sorrow be understood as a good-hearted friend: (i) he reveals his own secrets, (ii) he conceals the secrets of his friend, (iii) in misfortune he does not forsake the friend, (iv) he sacrifices even his life for the sake of his friend.

In four ways, householder, should one who gives good counsel be understood as a good-hearted friend: (i) he restrains one from evil, (ii) he causes one to be established in the good, (iii) he makes one hear what he has not heard, (iv) he points out the path to heaven.

In four ways, householder, should one who sympathizes be understood as a good-hearted friend: (i) he does not rejoice in failings, (ii) he rejoices in success, (iii) he restrains others speaking ill of the friend, (iv) he praises those who speak well of the friend.

Sigālovāda Sutta: *Dīgha-nikāya* III.185–187, trans. P.D.P.

MAHĀYĀNA

Good governance

A good ruler *M.23*

This passage escribes such a ruler as compassionate and caring.

Son of good family, a lay bodhisattva who is the king of a great country should care for his subjects as if they each were his only child. He should teach them to refrain from unwholesome actions and to cultivate wholesome qualities. If a criminal is caught, he should receive corporal punishment and public humiliation, but he should not be put to death.

A sixth of people's property should be paid in tax. When he sees evil-minded, short-tempered people, he should teach them to cultivate patience and awareness, speaking to them with kind words. As king, he should be able to separate good people from bad. He should be tolerant towards criminals, and not punish them. He should practise charity often, giving according to how many possessions he has. ...

When he sees the poor he should generate great compassion. He should always be content with his own lands. He should never believe

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the slander spread by evil-minded people. He should never seek to accumulate wealth in a way which is contrary to the Dharma.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.13, p.1047a02–05, 09–11, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.24 Leaders should be generous and helpful

This urges leaders to act with compassion for poor and disabled people.

The Buddha addressed the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, 'In this world, there are kings, prime ministers, high officials, great elders, great leaders, great brahmins, and so forth. Such people may encounter those who are most lowly, poor and in need, or those who are infirm, crippled, dumb, mute, deaf, insane, blind, or who have some other kind of deficiency. These great kings, and others, may wish to give these people alms. Whether they give by their own hand, or by having others arrange for gifts to be given on their behalf, if they can give with great compassion, with awareness, with a smile, and with kind words of comfort, they will obtain as much karmic benefit as if they had given alms to as many Buddhas as there are grains of sand in a hundred River Ganges.'

Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrva-praṇidhāna Sūtra, Taishō vol.13, text 412, ch.10, p.786b20–25, trans. D.S.

M.25 The vows of a queen

In this passage a queen vows to always act for the benefit of others.

When she had heard the Buddha's prophecy, Śrīmālā[264] stood respectfully and took the vow of ten great undertakings, 'Blessed One, from now until I realize awakening, no thought of breaking the precepts that I have undertaken will arise in me, ... no thought of disrespect for the elders will arise in me, ... no thought of hatred toward living beings will arise in me, ... no thought of jealousy of others' physical appearance or possessions will arise in me, ... no thought of miserliness regarding inner or outer things will arise in me, ... I will never accumulate things for my own benefit; whatever I possess will be given away in order to help those who are miserable and destitute, ... I will never practise the four methods of drawing together harmoniously[265] for my *own* benefit, but in order to help all living beings; ... I will help living beings with a mind which is not clouded by attachment, tiredness, or hindrances, ... when I see beings who are lonely, unprotected, imprisoned, afflicted by disease, or suffering from any kind of disaster or misery, I will not desert them even for an instant, but will instead bring them to safety and help them, with the right motivation of helping to free them from suffering; only then will I be happy to leave them, ... when I see unwholesome practices such as hunting or trapping living beings or breaking the precepts, I will not leave them be. As I have the power to help them, if I see people like this anywhere, I will train those who are to be trained, and assist those who need assistance, ... I will never fail to bear the true

264 The daughter of King Pasenadi and Queen Mallikā in Th.46.

265 Giving, endearing speech, helpful conduct, and working together equally towards a common goal.

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Dharma in mind. ... I therefore take this vow of ten great undertakings.'

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 353, ch.2, p.217b24–c22, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Peace, violence and crime

Bodhisattvas work for peace *M.26*

In the midst of great battles, they favour neither side.

Greatly powerful bodhisattvas delight in bringing people together in harmony.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.7, section 6, verse 27, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

How to deal with difficult behaviour *M.27*

So when seeing an enemy or even a friend behaving badly, by thinking that such things arise from particular conditions, I shall remain happy.

People's faults are temporary visitors. Beings are by nature pleasant. So anger towards them is no more appropriate than anger at the sky when it is filled with acrid smoke.

Bodhicaryāvatāra VI. 33 and 40, trans. from Sanskrit by P.H.

Against capital punishments *M.28*

This passage advises that a ruler should not punish people by killing or mutilating them as this will mean that they die angry, so as to be reborn in a lower state, thus:

It is not right to kill, destroy sense organs, or cut off limbs that cannot be restored ... (these) are improper and dishearten and repulse people. They are not the ways of a righteous ruler.

Ārya-satyaka-parivarta, p.200 of L.Jamspal's trans. from Tibetan.

Occasionally, a *bodhisattva* should regretfully use violence to save others *M.29*

This passage allows violence in very limited circumstances, to save others, but only by spiritually developed people who are prepared to take on the potential bad karma of such acts.

A bodhisattva who sees a thief or a robber who is about to kill many hundreds of living beings, great individuals, disciples, solitary-buddhas, or bodhisattvas in order to profit himself, or who is ready to repeatedly commit the five acts which have immediate bad karmic consequences, should reflect in the following way. 'If I take the life of this living being, I will be reborn in hell. I would gladly be reborn in hell if it means that this living being can avoid such a fate, a fate which will certainly befall him if he commits one of the five acts which have immediate bad karmic consequences.' With this attitude, a bodhisattva should take the life of this person in a wholesome state of mind, a neutral state of mind, out of empathy, even though he fears the rebirth it will bring him. This is not a transgression, but on the contrary will bring him a great deal of beneficial karma.

If there are kings or ministers who are excessively violent and

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cruel towards other living beings, and who put all of their energies into oppressing others, a bodhisattva should not hesitate to use force to remove them from their positions of power. A great deal of beneficial karma will flow from such an action when it is done out of empathy, and with the intention to benefit others and bring them happiness.

Bodhisattva-bhūmi 9.1 and 9.2, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Wealth and economy

M.30 Contentment and generosity

Anyone who wishes to obtain worldly pleasure and transcendental bliss should be generous. The wise should think ... 'Even if I possessed all four continents, and could thereby indulge in countless pleasures, I would still not be satisfied. I should therefore practise generosity, in order to obtain transcendental bliss. I should not seek heavenly or human pleasure, because this is impermanent and limited.'

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.19, p.1056b14–19. trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.31 The danger of attachment to celebrity, beauty and wealth

19. The Buddha said, 'People follow their desires, and long for fame. This is like burning incense. Living beings smell the incense, but the incense itself is burned up and turns to smoke. This is the fame of the ignorant, the greedy, the vulgar, those who do not guard the truth of the Path. Fame is dangerous and brings misfortune. One comes to regret being famous.

20. The Buddha said, 'People crave money and sex. This is like a child's desire for honey smeared on a razor blade. The honey will not bring the satisfaction of a full meal, but still the child risks cutting his tongue to get it.'

'*Sūtra* of Forty-two Sections'/*Sishierzhang jing, Taishō* vol.17, text 784, p.723a22–26, trans. D.S.

The equality of men and women

M.32 Gender prejudice

This striking passage criticizes prejudice against women, as it wrongly views gender as being based on unchanging essential natures.

Śāriputra said, 'Goddess, why don't you transform yourself from your female state?'

The goddess said, 'I have searched for the state of being female for fully twelve years, and yet I have not found it. Brother Śāriputra, if an illusionist created an apparition of a woman and someone were to say to her, "Why don't you transform yourself from your female state?", what would he say?'

Śāriputra said, 'She does not exist in any state.' The goddess said, 'In just the same way, Brother Śāriputra, as all phenomena do not exist in

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any state, and are illusory apparitions, why would you ask "Why don't you transform yourself from your female state?"?'

Then the goddess used her supernormal powers to make the Elder Śāriputra look like her, and to make herself look like the Elder Śāriputra. Then the goddess, who looked like Śāriputra, asked Śāriputra, who looked like the goddess, 'Brother Śāriputra, why don't you transform yourself from your female state?'

Śāriputra, who looked like the goddess, said, 'I do not know what to transform! My male body has disappeared, and been transformed into a female body!'

The goddess said, 'If the elder could transform himself from his female state, then so too any woman could transform herself from her female state. Just as the elder is not a woman, but only looks like a woman, so too all women only have the bodies of women. They are not really women, but only look like women. This is what the Blessed One meant when he said, "All phenomena are neither female nor male."'

Then the goddess stopped using her supernormal powers, and the Venerable Śāriputra got his own body back again. Then the goddess said to the Venerable Śāriputra, 'Brother Śāriputra, where have you made your female body go?'

Śāriputra said, 'I haven't made anything, or transformed anything'.

The goddess said, 'In just the same way, all phenomena are neither made nor transformed, and that nothing is made or transformed is the word of the Buddha.'

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.6, sections 14–15, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

A wise woman who is prophesised to become a Buddha in the future *M.33*

Here the Buddha addresses Queen Śrīmālā, having just said that she will in time attain unsurpassed perfect awakening.

You have praised the true qualities of the Tathāgata. Because of this wholesome root you will become a ruler of the gods, innumerable immeasurable eons from now. Wherever you are born, you will see me and praise me just as you have done in this present existence, in exactly the same terms. Moreover, you will serve innumerable countless Buddhas for twenty thousand immeasurable eons. You will then become a Buddha, a Tathāgata, an arhant, a perfectly awakened Buddha named Universal Light.

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 353, ch.1, p.217b11–16, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Respect for and gratitude to parents

Consideration and respect for parents, especially one's mother *M.34*

This passage details what we owe our parents, and teaches that we should not neglect them.

The Buddha said, 'People are born into this world with a father and a mother as their parents. If there is no father, there will be no birth. If there is no mother, there will be no giving birth. Relying completely

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on its mother, the foetus dwells within her body for ten lunar months. When the mother's term is complete, the child is born onto the ground. The father and mother raise the child. They lay him in a crib. The father and mother carry the child in their arms. They make the child say "He, he". The child smiles, but cannot speak. They feed the child whenever he is hungry, and without a mother he cannot be fed. They give the child something to drink whenever he is thirsty, and without a mother he will have no milk to drink. Even if she is hungry herself, she will take bitter food for herself, and nourish her child with her sweet milk. She will give up a dry place to her child, and sit in the damp herself. If there are no such bonds, there is no family. Without his mother, the child will not be provided for. A loving mother raises her child. She takes him out of his crib when he is dirty, and feeds him without worrying about the dirt she gets under her own fingernails. Altogether, a child drinks fully four hundred and forty litres of milk from his mother. The care a mother gives to her child is immeasurable, like the heavens. Oh, how can a mother's kindness be repaid?'

Ānanda said to the Buddha, 'Blessed One, how can the care she gives to her child be repaid? Please explain this for us.'

The Buddha replied to Ānanda, 'Listen carefully and attentively, and I will explain this to you in detail. The care given to us by our fathers and our mothers is immeasurable, like the heavens. If a child, filled with love and respect for his parents, makes copies of sūtras in order to make his father and mother happy, or makes ullambana trays on the fifteenth day of the seventh month[266] and offers them to the Buddha and the Sangha, then the karmic fruits he will obtain will be immeasurable. In this way, he can repay the care he has received from his father and his mother. Alternatively, if anyone copies this sūtra, disseminates it widely, accepts it as true, and recites it, then this person will repay the care he has received from his father and his mother.

How can the care given by one's father and one's mother be repaid? Every day, one's father and mother go to work. One's mother goes to draw water from the well, walking half a kilometre to the east or to the west to do so, and pounds rice in the cellar. Whenever she is away from home, she worries that her child might be at home crying. She thinks about how her child responds when she returns home, and he sees her approaching. He might shake his head from side to side in his crib, or crawl on his belly whilst he cries out for his mother. She will bend down to pick him up, and brush the dust off him with both hands. Then, making comforting sounds, she will breast-feed him. The mother is filled with joy when she sees her child. The child is filled with happiness when he sees his mother. The care and affection they have for one another is precious. There is nothing greater than this love.

When the child is two or three years old, he begins to form his own ideas and thoughts, but he still doesn't know when it is time to eat without his mother to tell him. If his father and mother are invited to a fine banquet where they are served with cake and meat, they will

266 See M.36.

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not eat everything they are offered, but take some of it back with them and give it to their child. Nine times out of ten, the child is happy, but if he doesn't get anything, he will cry, or pretend to cry, out of pride. A child who is filled with pride does not show respect to his parents, and should be spanked five times. A child who respects his parents will not complain, but will show them love and obedience.

When the child grows up, and begins to spend time with his friends, his father and mother will comb and brush his hair. If he wants nice clothes to wear, they will wear worn and threadbare clothes themselves, and give their child good-quality new silks. When he begins to go out on his own, on public or private business, his parents cherish him in their hearts, whether he goes north or south, and follow him in their minds, whether he goes east or west, holding their heads to one side.

When he starts to think about finding a wife, they find a woman for him. He distances himself from his father and mother, sharing conversation and pleasure with his wife in the privacy of their room. Although his father and mother are now old and frail, he ignores them all day long, from morning until evening, and doesn't go and speak to them.

Sooner or later, either his mother or his father will pass away, and his surviving parent will be left to sit alone in an empty room, like a guest in someone else's house. They receive no care or affection, and are cold without a quilt to keep them warm. They suffer hardships and difficulties. A weak and elderly parent may even become infested with lice, such that they cannot sleep day or night. They may give a long sigh, and ask themselves, "What unwholesome action did I perform in the past, in order to give birth to a child who has no respect for his parents?", or go to their child and scold him, with angry stares. He and his wife lower their heads, but with a smirk, and the child shows not respect for his parent. He deserves to be spanked five times, like a child, as what he and his wife have done is equivalent to the five acts with immediate bad karmic consequences.[267]

When his parents call out for help with some urgent problem, nine times out of ten, the child will not respond. He is constantly disobeying his parents, staring at them with anger and hatred in his eyes, and saying "You should die soon. Why are you still above the ground?" When his parents hear this they are sad and distressed, and they weep. With tears flowing down their cheeks, they cry out to their child with swollen eyes, "When you were small, you could not have survived without us. We gave you life. Perhaps it would have been better if we hadn't."'

The Buddha said to Ānanda, 'If a son or daughter of good family accepts this sūtra, The Great Perfection of Wisdom Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Importance of Caring for One's Father and Mother, as true, reads it recites it and copies it for their father and mother, and if even one sentence or one verse of it should reach their eyes or their ears, then their five grave sins will be completely and permanently eradicated. They will often see the Buddha and hear the Dharma, and they will swiftly attain liberation.'

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267 These are: injuring a Buddha, killing an *arhant*, causing schism in the Sangha, killing one's mother, and killing one's father.

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Ānanda rose from his seat, placed his upper robe over his left shoulder, knelt before the Buddha with folded hands, and said, 'Blessed One, what is the name of this sūtra? How is it to be preserved and honoured?"

The Buddha said to Ānanda, 'This name of this sūtra is the "Sūtra on the Importance of Caring for One's Father and Mother". Any living being who makes copies of this sūtra, burns incense, invites the Buddhas to teach, worships and honours the Three Jewels, or gives food and drink to the Sangha, in order to bring blessings to his parents, will repay the care they have given to him.

'*Sūtra* on the Importance of Caring for One's Father and Mother'/ *Fumuenzhong jing, Taishō* vol. 85, text 2887, pp.1403b27–1404a19, trans. D.S.

M.35 Help for dying parents

This passage urges people to ease the karmic burden of parents or other relatives who are dying by doing good deeds on their behalf.

Living beings have unwholesome habits ranging from the trivial to the immeasurably serious. All living beings have these kinds of habits. When one's parents or relatives are approaching death, it is appropriate to generate karmic benefit for them, to help them on the road ahead.

Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrva-praṇidhāna Sūtra, Taishō vol.13, text 412, ch.7, p.784a05–07, trans. D.S.

Sharing karmic benefit with dead relatives

M.36 Benefitting parents and ancestors by giving donations on their behalf

This passages urges one to do good deeds on behalf of one's parents and other ancestors, which they can benefit from.

The Buddha told Maudgalyāyana, 'The fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month[268] is the pravāraṇa day for the Sangha.[269] On this day, for the benefit of one's mother and father, and one's ancestors going back seven generations, one should serve the most virtuous Sangha who have gathered from every direction. One should serve them food, all kinds of fruit, jars and vessels, incense, oil, lamps, bedding, mats to sit on, and all sorts of delicious things from many places.

On this day, there may be members of the noble Sangha present who have been in meditation in the mountains, as well as those who have attained the fruits of practice and the path, those who have been doing walking meditation beneath trees, those who have mastered the six supernormal powers, those who have been teaching, those who are aiming to becoming disciples or solitary-buddhas, those who are bodhisattvas, great beings at the tenth stage, and those who have temporarily transformed themselves and taken on the form of monks.

268 Generally in August.

269 The day of mutual admonition (confession) among monks, after the long summer retreat.

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They have all assembled in order to receive the pravāraṇa offerings with unity and unanimity of mind, having attained the pure morality of the noble Sangha, with their lofty and limitless virtues.

The mother and father, the ancestors going back seven generations, and all the relatives of those who make offerings to the members of the Sangha at the pravāraṇa ceremony will be delivered from the suffering of the three states of misfortune.[270] They will receive food and clothing, and in due course they will attain liberation. If their parents are still alive, they will enjoy happiness for more than a hundred years. If their parents are dead, then they, along with their ancestors going back seven generations, will be reborn among the gods, entering into the heavenly radiance of divine flowers, and enjoying innumerable pleasures.'

Ullambana Sūtra, Taishō vol.16, text 685, p.779b12-24, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

A *bodhisattva* precept on the transfer of karmic benefit *M.37*

This is part of one of the forty-eight secondary precepts of the ethical code of the East Asian Brahmā's Net Sūtra *(Fan wang jing).*

The bodhisattva's precept on rescuing living beings: On the day his father, mother, or siblings die, he should ask a Dharma Teacher to recite the Sūtra on the Precepts of the bodhisattva for the benefit of the deceased, in order that they might encounter a Buddha or be reborn amongst human beings or amongst the gods. A bodhisattva who fails to do so disgraces himself by committing a secondary offence.

'Brahmā's Net *Sūtra'/Fan wang jing, Taishō* vol.24, text 1484, p.1006b16–b18, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Doing good deeds on behalf of dead relatives reborn as hungry ghosts *M.38*

This passage urges one to care for dead relatives by doing good deeds on their behalf (cf. Th.109), in order to bring them karmic benefits.

A father who has been reborn as a hungry ghost may be able to share in the karmic benefit accumulated by his son, if the actions which generate this karmic benefit are dedicated to him. If he was reborn among the gods, he would not care about human affairs. Why is this? It is because he would have obtained the precious possessions of the heavenly realm. If he was reborn in hell, he would be unable to receive the benefits of the offering, because he would be in great physical agony, with no chance to think about anything else. He would also be unable to receive the benefits of the dedication of good karma if he was reborn as a human being or an animal. Why is it that only a hungry ghost can share in the karmic benefit of actions which are dedicated to him? The reason that he has been reborn as a hungry ghost is that he was bound by greed and meanness in his previous existence. When he is born as a hungry ghost, he regrets the way he has acted, and thinks about how he can receive the benefits of good karma which is dedicated to him. This is why he is able to receive these benefits. If

270 Being born in hell, as an animal or as a hungry ghost.

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karmic benefit is dedicated to others, who have been born in other realms, then relatives of the one making the dedication who have been born as hungry ghosts will receive the benefits of this dedication, rather than those for whom they were intended. This is why those who are wise should accumulate karmic benefit, and dedicate it to hungry ghosts.[271]

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.19, p.1059c05–13, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA

Advice on compassionate royal policy

V.12 **Nāgārjuna on royal policy**

Since the principles of good governance and a peaceful society were set by the Buddha himself, there was not much left to be added by later Buddhist authors. While the Vajrayāna, in particular, did not develop any social theory of its own, its followers have considered the Mahāyāna principles of compassion, generosity and so forth to be the most important guidelines in the social arena. They were inspired by Indian Mahāyāna literary sources such as the 'The Precious Garland' (Ratnāvalī, *or* Ratnamālā)[272] *of Nāgārjuna, one of the greatest Buddhist masters, the founder of Madhyamaka philosophy. Written in the form of an epistle addressed to a young ruler of the Śātavāhana Empire (c. second century CE), it is a series of Mahāyāna instructions in 500 verses. The selected passages are derived from the third ('Amassing the collections for awakening') and fourth ('Royal policy') chapters of that work, where Nāgārjuna instructs his royal benefactor on how to rule his kingdom as part of practising the* bodhisattva *path.*

[Supporting the Dharma]

231. Out of respect (for the Three Jewels), create a vast abundance of Buddha-images, stūpas, temples, and other large (monastic) buildings.

232. Please have beautifully shaped Buddha-images sculpted from all kinds of precious material, nicely painted, seated on lotuses, adorned with precious gems.

233. Please protect with all your might the Holy Dharma and the community of monks, and decorate stūpas with gold and jewelled lattice-work.

234. Pay homage to the stūpas with many gold and silver flowers, diamonds, corals, pearls, emeralds, cat's eye gems (lapis lazuli), and sapphires.

235. Pay homage to those teaching the Holy Dharma, satisfy their needs with fees and services, and always rely on the Dharma.

271 These ideas are very similar to those expressed in the Theravāda *Milindapañha*, pp.294–95.

272 For a full translation, see RV.

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[Cultural policy]

238. Please provide the palm-leaves (for paper), black ink, and bamboo pens necessary for writing down the texts containing the words of the Buddha.

239. In order to spread knowledge, establish schoolhouses around the country and provide for field-workers to take care of teachers' livelihood.

[Health care]

240. In order to alleviate the pain of sentient beings, the old, the young, and the sick, grant remuneration of land to doctors and surgeons in your country.

[Setting up public facilities]

241. Please, in your fine wisdom, set up guesthouses, pleasure parks, bridges, ponds, pavilions, and water-tanks, equipped with bedding, food, fodder, and firewood.

242. Please erect pavilions in every town and village, and by Buddhist temples, and provide water-tanks along roadways where water supply is scarce.

[Social welfare measures]

243. With compassion, always take care of the sick, the homeless, the pain-stricken, the lowly, and the poor. Render dedicated service to their sustenance.

244. It is improper to partake of any readily available food or drink – whether cooked, grain, or fruit – before giving to the people who ask for them.

[Supplying equipment for public facilities]

245. Provide felt shoes, parasols, strainers, thorn-removing tweezers, needles and thread, and cool roof protection by the water-tanks.

246. Place some of the three medicinal fruits,[273] the three hot medicines,[274] butter, honey, eye-medicine, and anti-poisons by the water-tanks. Write up medical instructions and mantras (spells).

247. Please provide ointment for the body, feet and head, as well as woollen blankets, stools, some porridge, copper bowls, and axes (for chopping wood) by the water-tanks.

248. Please arrange for small tanks filled with sesame, rice, grains, spices, molasses, oil, and water to be stored in a cool shady place.

249. Please have reliable men to always put some food and water, heaps of molasses and grain, outside the openings of ant-nests.[275]

[Food offering to non-humans]

250. Before and after taking meals, always offer proper food to the hungry ghosts, dogs, insects, birds, and others.

[Economic measures]

251. Provide special care for the victims of persecution, crop failure, oppression, epidemics, and for the populace of conquered areas.

—

273 Yellow, Beleric, and Emblic Myrobalan.

274 Ginger, brown ginger(?), and piper longum.

275 Presumably to stop ants from invading the picnic area around the water-tanks.

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252. Help out poverty-stricken farmers with seeds and nourishment. Make sure that you have remitted their taxes and reduced their levy on the harvest.

253. To protect them from the affliction of want, remit tolls and reduce sales taxes. Also, spare them from the misery of waiting at your door (for alms).

254. Pacify the thieves and robbers of your country and other countries (under your dominion). Please keep interest rates level, and set market prices fairly.

[Principles of governance]

255. Whatever is reported by your ministers, you should find out about everything by yourself. Always do everything in a way that is beneficial to the world.

256. Just as you care to think 'What shall I do to benefit myself?', in the same way should you care about thinking what to do to benefit others.

257. You should make yourself readily available to provide all that is desired, just as earth, water, fire, wind, plants, and forest trees (are available to all). ...

[Founding new religious establishments]

307. You have obtained your wealth through being generous to the needy in the past. If you are ungenerous, due to your ungratefulness and attachment, you will never get anything in the future. ...

309. Always delight in great compassion and sublime deeds, because the fruition of sublime deeds is going to be even more sublime.

310. Create religious establishments, famed and glorious homes for the Three Jewels that lesser kings have not even conceived in their minds. ...

313. You will have to pass away powerless, leaving behind all your possessions, but whatever you will have done for the sake of Dharma will help you move forward. ...

315. If you use up your wealth you will be happy in this life, if you give it away you will be happy in another one. If you neither use it up nor give it away but waste it, you will have only suffering – no happiness at all.

316. You will not be able to make a donation just before you die because your unfaithful ministers, no longer treasuring you but wishing to please the new monarch, will render you powerless.

317. Therefore use your wealth to create religious establishments while you are still at power, your life always being threatened by extinction like an oil lamp in the tempest.

[Maintaining existing establishments]

318. You should also preserve all other existing religious establishments – temples and so forth – founded by previous monarchs in their previous condition.

319. Please have them attended by the harmless, the virtuous, the morally disciplined, the kind-hearted, the truthful, the tolerant, the uncompetitive, and the ever-diligent.

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[Further welfare measures]

320. Let the blind, the sick, the lowly, the homeless, the destitute, and the cripple also receive their share of food and drink without any obstacle.

321. Provide all kinds of support to the followers of Dharma who are not looked after, even if they live in other countries.

[Appointing chief officials]

322. As chief leaders of religious establishments, appoint people who are not negligent, not irritating but wise; who live in accord with the Dharma, and do not harm anyone.

323. As ministers, appoint people who know the social tradition and follow the Dharma; who are gentle, pure, faithful, and non-malicious; who are of good family, perfect demeanour, and are grateful (to you).

324. As army commander, appoint someone who is magnanimous, free of attachment, courageous, gentle, reliable, ever-conscientious, and is a follower of Dharma.

325. As chief leaders, appoint venerable elders who can remember the pure ways of the Dharma, who are knowledgeable and skilled in the sciences; are well-balanced and of gentle character.

[Way of governance]

326. Get monthly reports from them on every affair (belonging to their office), and having heard them, you should decide personally on all matters relating to the religious establishments and so forth.

327. If your governance is for the benefit of Dharma rather than for the sake of fame and greed, then it will be very fruitful – otherwise it will not. ...

329. You should gather around you many (advisors) of good family who are old in experience, who know the custom, abstain from evil, and who can perceive what must be done.

[Treatment of criminals]

330. Never resort to executing, binding, and torturing (criminals) even if they deserve it. Filled with compassion, always take them under your care.

331. Monarch, you should always think of just compassionately benefitting even those embodied beings who have committed some intolerable crime.

332. Exercise even more special compassion toward those who have committed the horrible crime of murder. Those people who ruin themselves are worthy of a great being's compassion.

333. Release those imprisoned for minor offences within one to five days, and do the same to the rest of them whenever appropriate. Never leave anyone unreleased.

334. Should you forget to release anyone, lack of self-restraint will follow, and continuous evil will follow from that lack of self-restraint.

335. As long as prisoners are not released, keep them happy and comfortable by putting barbers, bathing facility, food, clothing, drink, and medicine at their disposal.

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336. Just as a (parent) wishing to civilize his ill-mannered children, exercise punishment out of compassion rather than out of anger or for wealth.

337. Once you have found under investigation that someone had committed murder out of extreme hatred, expel them from the country without killing or harming them in any way.

[Advice on how to rule the kingdom]

338. Independently keep a spying eye over the whole country. Ever-conscientious and mindful, do everything in a way that accords with the Dharma.

339. You should offer appropriate gifts, respect, and service to those (religious persons) who are the foundations of good qualities, and also to the rest of them according to their merits.

340. Let the birds of the people rest on the tree of the monarch with its shade of patience, its blooming flowers of respect, and its big fruits of generosity.

341. People are going to be pleased with a king that is generously disposed and majestic, just like with a sugar candy with cardamom and pepper coating. ...

343. You have not brought this kingdom with you from a former life, nor will you carry it with you to the next – you have won it through practising the Dharma, and therefore you should not do anything against the Dharma.

'The Precious Garland', vv.231–257, 307, 309–10, 313, 315–27, 329–41, and 343, trans. T.A.

Reflection on the kindnesses of one's mother

V.13 Developing loving kindness and compassion by reflecting on the kindness of one's mothers in this and past lives

This passage is a full translation of the seventh chapter of a famous Tibetan text, 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation' of the great Tibetan master Gampopa (1079–1153). It is a straightforward instruction on the meditative development of loving kindness and compassion, the two most important factors of the bodhisattva's *path to Buddhahood, the goal he wants to attain for the sake of all sentient beings. The two qualities are applicable in all the social aspects of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism; they are to be cultivated in all walks of life – friendships, relationships, family, and society at large. An important theme in the passage is that just as one owes great kindness to one's present mother, due to her great kindness and care for one, so one should be kind and compassionate to all beings, as they have each been one's mother in countless past rebirths (see Th.74 and V.18).*

Now, as the antidote for attachment to the happiness of peace, I will teach contemplation on loving kindness and compassion. 'Attachment to the happiness of peace' means to aspire to nirvana just for oneself and, due to lack of love for sentient beings, not to do anything for the sake of others. That is the attitude of those on the Lesser Vehicle.[276] As

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it is said, 'For one's own concerns the concerns of others, though they be many, should be neglected. If one considers one's own concerns more important, one will achieve one's highest aim.'[277] But once loving kindness and compassion dawn in one's mind, one will love sentient beings and will not be able to reach liberation just alone. That is why one should better cultivate loving kindness and compassion. As Master Mañjuśrīkīrti said, 'Those on the Mahāyāna path should not neglect loving kindness and compassion even for a moment.' Furthermore, 'Others' concerns are taken under care by loving kindness and compassion, rather than by anger.'

[Loving kindness]

Immeasurable loving kindness will be discussed under six aspects: its types, objects of reference, definition, method of cultivation, full development, and benefits.

There are three types of loving kindness: (1) loving kindness with reference to sentient beings, (2) loving kindness with reference to the Dharma, and (3) non-referential loving kindness. The 'Akṣayamati Request Sūtra' says: 'Loving kindness with reference to sentient beings is practised by those bodhisattvas who have just developed awakening-mind.[278] Loving kindness with reference to the Dharma is practised by those bodhisattvas who are already engaged in the bodhisattva activities. Non-referential loving kindness without reference to anything is practised by those bodhisattvas who have acquired patient acceptance with respect to the unborn'.[279]

Loving kindness regarding sentient beings: The first type of loving kindness is directed towards sentient beings. It is defined as the mentality of wanting them to find happiness. The method of cultivating loving kindness basically depends on recalling the kindness of others. So first you should reflect on the kindness of sentient beings.

In this life, the person who has showed us the greatest kindness is our mother. How many types of kindness did our mother show to us? Four kinds, namely: (1) the kindness of nurturing our bodies, (2) the kindness of undergoing hardships for us, (3) the kindness of protecting our lives, and (4) the kindness of showing us the world. As the 'Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra in 8,000 Lines' says: 'Why is it? Because the mother nurtures us, goes through hardship for us, she protects our lives, and she shows us the world.'

First you should reflect on the kindness of her nurturing your body. This body of yours did not arise at once fully grown, with muscles well-

276 In the Tibetan tradition, the term 'Lesser Vehicle' (*Hīnayāna*) is understand in two ways: 1) to refer to the view a person holds, or 2) to refer to a person's motivation. In the context here, it is the second that is meant. In particular, the Tibetan tradition explicitly discusses that one might hold the *'Hīnayāna'* view and still have the motivation of the 'Mahāyāna', for example, have profound compassion for all beings. Conversely, one might assert that one holds the Mahāyāna view, but actually lack profound compassion, i.e., lack the Mahāyāna motivation.

277 Source unknown.

278 The compassionate aspiration for awakening.

279 The three types of loving kindness represent three stages of spiritual development, which is described in the first paragraph on the meditation on compassion (see below). 'Patient acceptance with respect to the unborn' refers to the direct, non-conceptual realization of emptiness, the absence of self-nature in all phenomena (see V.76).

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developed and in fine complexion. Rather it developed in your mother's belly gradually from a quivering, gelatinous mass, due to the elemental essence which is the life-sap of your mother's flesh and blood. It was nurtured by the vital essence of her food and developed even while she had to endure embarrassment, sickness, and all kinds of pain. Later, after she gave birth to it, she also took care of it and brought it up from a tiny thing to something as big as a yak.

The second is the kindness of her undergoing hardships for you. To begin with, you did not arrive here wearing clothes, adorned by ornaments, owning goods, and bringing provisions. You came empty-handed, with no material possessions other than a mouth and stomach. When you arrived in this unknown land with no acquaintances, your mother did not let you starve but gave you food to eat; she did not let you go thirsty but gave you drink to drink; she did not let you get cold but gave you clothes to wear; and she did not leave you poor but gave you possessions. She did not just give you things she did not need. She gave up her own food, her own drink, and her own clothes. She would not do anything for the happiness of her present life, or even for the well-being of her future lives, but looked after her child without actually caring for the happiness of either her present or future lives.

She did not obtain those things easily, but gave them to her child by undergoing much toil, wrong-doing, and pain. In terms of wrong-doing, she committed various unwholesome actions like fishing or butchery to feed her child. In terms of pain, while she was doing some kind of business or farm-work, day and night, she was wearing frost for her shoes, the morning star for her hat, riding the shank of her legs for her horse, flinging a woollen thread for her whip, exposing her calves to the dogs and her cheeks to the people in order to provide for her child.

Furthermore, she loved this useless stranger much more than her own father, mother, and teachers who were very kind to her. She looked upon him with loving eyes and warmed him with her smooth caress. She rocked him on top of her ten fingers and called him in a sweet voice, saying things like 'my dearest, precious one, darling, sweetheart, you are Mommy's delight!'

Third is the kindness of protecting your life. In the beginning, you did not have any functional mouth or hands, or the greater strength that you have now that makes you capable of working. Rather you were just like a tiny worm: frail, insignificant and lacking the ability to care for yourself. Your mother, however, did not reject but served you, held you in her lap, protected you from fire and water, held you away from precipices, dispelled all harm, and prayed for your safety. In fear for your life, in fear for your health, she performed an inconceivable and unthinkable number of divinations, astrological calculations, correcting-rites, recitations and other rituals. That is how she protected her child's life.

Fourth is the kindness of showing you the world. You did not come into this world knowing everything, greatly experienced, with a keen intellect from the first. You did not know how to do anything except to call out to close ones by wailing and crying and to beckon them with

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your hands and legs. When you could not eat, she taught you how to eat. When you could not dress, she taught you how to dress. When you could not walk, she taught you how to walk. When you could not talk, she taught you how to say 'yes' and 'no' and so forth. She raised you up by teaching the various skills needed so that your personal capacities now matched those of others.

Furthermore, she has not been your mother only in your present lifetime, but given that you have been wandering in saṃsāra since times without beginning, she has been your mother countless, innumerable times. That is what is said in the 'Beginningless Saṃsāra Sūtra': 'If all the earth and stones, plants and trees, and all the forests in this world were reduced down to bits as tiny as the pits of a juniper tree by one person and another person were to count them, they would one day come to an end. However, it is impossible to count how many times one sentient being has been your mother.' Also, (Nāgārjuna's) 'Letter to a Friend' (v.68) says: 'We would run out of earth trying to count our mothers with balls of clay the size of juniper berries.'

Each time she was your mother, she demonstrated the same kind of kindness as seen before. Therefore, since her kindness has been limitless, cherish her from your heart and meditate in order to develop a genuine care for her benefit and wish for her happiness.

Furthermore, all sentient beings have been your mother and every time they were so they were just as kind to you as the present one. How many sentient beings are there? Wherever space extends, it is filled up by sentient beings. That is what the 'Aspiration Prayer for Excellent Conduct Sūtra' says: 'Limitless as the infinity of space, such are the numbers of sentient beings.' Therefore, meditate for as long as it takes to develop a genuine wish for the benefit and happiness of all sentient beings wherever space extends. When that has been developed, it is actual loving kindness.' The 'Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras' says: 'From the marrow of their bones, bodhisattvas treat all sentient beings as their only child. That is why they always want to benefit them.'

When, through the power of loving kindness, tears well up in your eyes and the hairs on your body are made to stand up, that is great loving kindness. When that kind of loving kindness is developed toward all sentient beings equally, it is limitless loving kindness.

Loving kindness is fully developed when one no longer desires one's own happiness, but only those of other sentient beings.[280]

Contemplation on loving kindness has countless good qualities. As the 'Moon Lamp Sūtra' says, 'Limitless offerings of various kinds filling up myriads of Buddha-fields presented to the supreme beings do not match the worth of loving kindness.'

Even practising loving kindness for one moment brings limitless karmic benefit. The 'Precious Garland' (by Nāgārjuna) says: 'Even three-hundred pots of food given three times a day cannot match the karmic benefit of one moment of loving kindness' (RV.283).

280 This means that one's usual attitude of cherishing oneself at the expense of others is reversed, and one becomes more interested in the happiness of others – which, of course, also brings more happiness to oneself.

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Due to this practice one will, until the time of attaining awakening, receive eight kinds of benefit. According to the 'Precious Garland': 'One will be loved by gods and humans, one will also be protected by them, will have peace of mind and lots of happiness, will not be harmed by poison or weapons, will achieve one's aims without effort, and will be reborn in the (heaven-)world of Brahmā. Even if not liberated from saṃsāra, one obtains these eight qualities of loving kindness' (RV.284–85).[281]

[Compassion]

When loving kindness has thus been fully developed, it is not difficult to develop compassion. Immeasurable compassion is also discussed under six aspects: its types, objects of reference, definition, method of cultivation, full development, and benefits.

There are three types of compassion: (1) compassion with reference to sentient beings, (2) compassion with reference to the Dharma, and (3) non-referential compassion. The first type is born when one sees the pain of sentient beings in the lower realms, and so forth. The second is born as one meditates on the four Truths of the Noble Ones and, understanding the two types of causality,[282] one's mind turns away from the conceptions of permanence and solidity. Then one thinks 'How confused other sentient beings are, who, unaware of causality, grasp at permanence and solidity!', and develops compassion. The third type is born as, abiding in equipoise, one realizes the emptiness of all and everything – one develops special compassion for all sentient beings who grasp at the concrete existence of things. As it is said, 'When the bodhisattva in equipoise is perfected by the power of meditation, he develops special compassion for those who are seized by the demon of grasping at things.'[283]

Of these three types of compassion, now we shall present meditation on the first one. Its objects are all sentient beings. It is defined as the mentality of wanting them to be free from pain and its causes.

The method of cultivating this kind of compassion is that one meditates in connection with one's mother in this life. Imagine how strongly you would feel for your mother if some people in this life beat her up and cut her to pieces, cooked or roasted her, or if she was freezing so much that blisters developed all over her body and finally burst open. The sentient beings who have been born in the hells and suffer in just those ways have definitely been your mothers, so if they die such horrible deaths, how could you not feel compassion for them? Cultivate the compassion that wishes them to be free from their pain and its causes!

Again, if your mother in this life was tormented by thirst and hunger, tortured by sickness and pain, intimidated by fear and anxiety, then you would feel for her very strongly. The sentient beings who have been born as hungry ghosts and suffer in just those ways have defi-

281 These are also among the benefits of strong loving kindness at *Aṅguttara-nikāya* V.342.

282 The two kinds of causality implied by the four Truths of the Noble Ones: the origination and the cessation of the painful (see L.27).

283 Source unknown.

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nitely been your mothers, so if they are tormented by such pain, how could you not feel compassion for them? Cultivate the compassion that wishes them to be free from their pain and its causes!

Again, if your mother in this life was decrepit and disadvantaged, helplessly being used and exploited by others, stricken and beaten or slaughtered and cut into pieces, you would feel compassion for her. The sentient beings who have been born as animals and suffer in just those ways have definitely been your mothers, so if they are overpowered by such pain, how could you not feel compassion for them? Cultivate the compassion that wishes them to be free from their pain and its causes!

Again, if your mother was close to a precipice a thousand miles deep, unaware of the danger, with no-one to warn her against walking into it, and was just on the verge of falling into that precipice where she would experience immense pain and would never be able to come out of it, you would feel for her very strongly. The gods, humans, and demi-gods, are also by the great precipice of the lower realms, unaware of the danger, unable to discard their unwholesome wrong-doings, out of the reach of spiritual friends, just about to fall and experience the pain of the three lower realms which are very difficult to emerge from; so how could you not feel compassion for them? Cultivate the compassion that wishes them to be free from their pain and its causes!

Compassion is fully developed when one has cut the ties of self-cherishing and has learned the mentality, not just the words, of wanting all sentient beings to be free from pain and its causes.

Contemplation on compassion has countless good qualities. As the 'Narration of the Realization of Avalokiteśvara'[284] says: 'If one had just one quality, it would be as if all Buddha-qualities were in your palm. That one quality is none other than great compassion.' The 'Dharma Compendium Sūtra' says: 'Blessed One, wherever the precious wheel of a Cakravartin ('Wheel-turning' universal monarch) is present, his whole army is also present. Likewise, Blessed One, wherever the great compassion of a bodhisattva is present, all Buddha-qualities are also present.' The 'Secrets of the Tathāgata Sūtra' says: 'Owner of the Secret,[285] the omniscient wisdom of the Buddha grows from the root of compassion.'

When by loving kindness one wants sentient beings to find happiness and by compassion one wants them to be free from suffering, then one is no longer interested in just pursuing one's own happiness but rather, prefers to attain Buddhahood for the sake of sentient beings. Loving kindness and compassion are thus the antidotes for attachment to peace.

Thus, when you have developed loving kindness and compassion in your mind-stream, and cherish others more than yourself, then it is as said (in Atiśa's 'Lamp for the Path to Awakening' v.5: V.10): 'A supreme being is someone who wants to eliminate completely all the suffering of others through realizing it as one's own suffering.' This is the birth of a supreme being's mentality. ...

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.105–16, trans. T.A.

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284 M.55 is a passage on the great compassion of this heavenly *bodhisattva*.
285 Guhyapati (another name for the *bodhisattva* Vajrapāṇi)

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CHAPTER 5

ON HUMAN LIFE

THERAVĀDA

The cycle of rebirths (*saṃsāra*)

The idea of all beings as wandering from rebirth to rebirth, as determined by the mental orientation and ethical quality of their action (karma) is fundamental to Buddhism. Passage L.15 explains how the Buddha is seen to have directly remembered many of his past lives, and seen how beings are reborn according to their karma. This was on the night of his awakening, after meditatively calming his mind to a state of profound stillness and sensitivity.

Th.55 An ultimate beginning is not discernible

This passage introduces the idea of saṃsāra *– the cycle of rebirths through which beings have been 'wandering on', accompanied by the spiritual ignorance (not a lack of information, but a misperception of the nature of reality) and craving which fuel this process, with no known beginning to all this. Buddhism thus lacks any idea of the ultimate creation of the universe and beings.*

Monks, this cycle of wandering on is without a discoverable beginning. Of living beings running around and wandering around in the cycle, a first beginning is not discerned. Just as, monks, a man in this Jambudīpa[286] cuts the grass, sticks, branches, and foliage of this Jambudīpa and having brought it together carries it away making it into bundles of four inches, saying (successively) 'This is (represents) my mother; this is my mother's mother ...', the mothers of that person would not come to an end even though the grass, sticks, branches and foliage of this Jambudīpa became exhausted and came to an end. What is the reason for this? It is because this cycle of wandering on is without a known beginning. The first beginning of beings that run around and wander around hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving is not evident. Thus, for a long time monks, you have experienced severe suffering, experienced disaster, increased instances of death, so much so that it is appropriate to be disenchanted with, unattached to, and liberated from all conditioned things.

Tiṇakaṭṭha Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.178, trans. P.D.P.

Th.56 The reality of rebirth and karma

This passage emphasizes the error and danger of denying a future life, that how one is reborn depends on one's conduct, and that the awakened directly know the truth of such matters.

Now, householders, of those renunciants and brahmins with this doctrine and view: 'There is no (worth in a) gift, an offering, or (self-) sacrifice; there is no fruit or ripening of actions (karma) well done or

286 Representing both the Indian sub-continent and the world at large.

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ill done; there is no this world, no further world (i.e. this world is unreal, and one does not go to another world after death); there is no mother, no father (there is no worth in respecting one's parents: those who establish one in this world); there are no spontaneously arising beings (there are no worlds of rebirth in which certain kinds of heavenly beings come into existence without parents); there are in this world no renunciants and brahmins who are faring rightly, practising rightly, and who proclaim this world and a world beyond having realized them by their own higher knowledge (spiritual development is not possible; people cannot come to have direct meditative knowledge of rebirth into a variety of kinds of world)' – of them it is to be expected that they will avoid these three wholesome things: good conduct of body, speech and mind, and that they will practise these three unwholesome things: bad conduct of body, speech and mind. Why so? Because these honourable renunciants and brahmins do not see the danger, degradation and defilement of unwholesome states, nor do they see in wholesome states the advantage of transcending sensual desires, and the aspect of cleansing.

Because there actually is a further world, the view of one who thinks, 'There is no further world' is his wrong view. Because there actually is a further world, when he is resolved that 'There is no further world', that is his wrong resolve.

Apaṇṇaka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.402, trans. P.H.

Believing in rebirth and karma is a 'best bet' *Th.57*

While rebirth and karma are seen as realities confirmed by the Buddha, unless a person has also directly confirmed their existence, they remain for them beliefs. This passage argues that such beliefs bring benefits whether or not one has experienced knowledge of their truth.

When, Kālāmas, this disciple of the noble ones has thus made his mind free of enmity, free of ill-will, undefiled and pure, he has won four assurances in this very life. The first assurance he has won is this: 'If there is a further world, and if there is a fruit and ripening of well done and ill done deeds, it is possible that, with the dissolution of the body, after death, I shall arise in a good destination, in a heavenly world'. The second assurance he has won is this: 'If there is no further world, and if there is no fruit and ripening of well done and ill done deeds, still right here, in this very life, I will live happily, free of enmity and ill-will'. The third assurance he has won is this: 'Suppose evil befalls the evil-doer. Then, as I do not intend evil for anyone, how can suffering afflict me, one who does no evil deed?' The fourth assurance he has won is this: 'Suppose evil does not befall the evil-doer. Then right here I see myself purified in both respects (neither doing evil nor experiencing any evil results)'.

Kesaputta (or *Kālāma) Sutta*: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.192, trans. P.D.P and P.H.

The main rebirth realms *Th.58*

This passage briefly enumerates the five main kinds of rebirths, though a sixth, as an asura, *or demi-god, is sometimes added.*

And what, monks, is the diversity of action (karma)? There is action (whose fruit) is to be experienced in the hells, or in the animal realm,

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or in the sphere of ghosts, or in the human world, or (as a god) in the heavens. ...

And what, monks, is the ripening of action? Action, I say, has a threefold ripening: in this life, in the next life, or subsequently.

Nibbedhika Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya III.415, trans. P.H.

Precious human birth

Th.59 Rebirth as a human as a rare opportunity

In this passage, it is affirmed that many more beings are reborn other than at a human level, such that heedfulness of the nature of one's actions is vital. Of course the number of land animals, birds, fish and insects greatly outnumber the human population of our planet.

Then the Blessed One took a little bit of soil with the tip of his fingernail and addressed the monks: 'Monks, which is more, the little bit of soil I have taken with the tip of my fingernail or this great earth?' '... compared with the great earth, the little soil the Blessed One took with the tip of his fingernail is not even the minutest part.' 'In the same way, monks, it is only a few living beings who are reborn among humans,[287] whereas a much larger number of living beings are reborn as other than human. Therefore, monks you should train yourself thus: "We shall live heedfully".'

Nakhasikhā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.263, trans. P.D.P.

Th.60 Being born a human who can hear the Dhamma is rare

This passage makes clear that to be reborn a human, especially when the teaching of a Buddha is available, is a rare and precious opportunity. Humans have greater freedom of action than those in the lower rebirths, and the mental capacity to be able to fathom the Dhamma.

Difficult is it to attain the human state; difficult is the life of mortals

Difficult is it to come to hear the good Dhamma; difficult is it for Buddhas to arise.

Dhammapada 182, trans. P.H.

Th.61 Remember, one's life is short, so practice now, while you can!

As a great flood sweeps away a sleeping village, death carries away a person of distracted mind who is only concerned with life's flowers.

Dhammapada 47, trans. P.H.

287 Or as gods, the commentary adds, in line with *Saṃyutta-nikāya* V.474, which says that more humans are reborn at less than a human level than at a human level.

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Our world in the context of the universe

Clusters of worlds throughout the universe *Th.62*

This passage shows that Buddhism has never seen our world as the only physical world, or at the centre of the universe. It is seen as part of a thousandfold[288] *cluster of worlds, with a thousand of these clusters forming a higher-level galactic cluster, and a thousand of these galactic clusters forming a yet higher-level super-galactic cluster. The Buddha is not seen to have created any world, but he is seen to be able to contact beings throughout this third level. Each of the individual worlds referred to have their own beings, including their own set of heavens.*

Ānanda, a thousand times the world in which the sun and moon revolve and illuminate the directions with their brightness: this is called a thousandfold minor world-system. There, there are a thousand moons, a thousand suns, a thousand kingly central mountains, a thousand ... [set of four continents] and a thousand four great oceans; a thousand of (each of the heavens) of: the Four Guardian gods, the Thirty-three gods, Yāma, the Contented, Delighters in Creating, Controllers of Others' Creations, and the brahmā worlds.

Ānanda, a thousand times the minor world-system: this is called a thousand-to-the-second-order middling world-system.

Ānanda, a thousand times a thousand-to-the-second-order middling world-systems: this is called a thousand-to-the-third-order great world-system.

Ānanda, the Tathāgata can convey his (radiance and then) voice as far as he wants within this.

Abhibhū Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.227–228, trans. P.H.

Cycles of cosmic eons *Th.63*

It is said that worlds go through four huge phases: coming to an end, remaining dissolved, developing again, and remaining, till again coming to an end. These four make up an eon (Aṅguttara-nikāya II.142). The passage below illustrates the huge length of an eon, and the incalculable number that have passed during which beings wander from rebirth to rebirth.

Suppose, monk, there is a great stone mountain seven miles long, seven miles wide, and seven miles high. ... one solid mass of rock. At the end of every century, a man would stroke it once with a piece of fine cloth. That huge stone mountain might be worn down and eliminated by his action, but an eon would not yet have come to an end. So long is an eon, monk. And of eons of such a length, we have (from life to life) wandered through so many: so many hundreds, thousands and hundreds of thousands of eons.

Pabbata Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.181–182, trans. P.H.

288 A 'thousand' can be seen, here, as representing some large grouping.

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Karma

The idea of karma in Buddhism is that intentional actions (Pāli kamma, *Skt* karma*) naturally produce certain results: good actions lead to pleasant results and good character-traits, and bad ones to unpleasant results and bad traits. The results are not 'rewards' or 'punishments', as there is not seen to be any God handing out the results. Nor are the results set up as 'lessons to learn', though a person may hopefully develop insights by reflection on life events as possible results of prior behaviour. Karmic results are seen simply as natural results, arising from a kind of law of nature. A common simile is that a karma is like a seed, and its results are like the fruits that develop from the seed. A term for a good action and its potency to bring good karmic fruits is* puñña *Pāli, Skt* puṇya*), often translated as 'meritorious action' and 'merit'. This, however suggests karmic results are some merited or deserved reward, rather than natural results. Hence* puñña *is better translated 'karmically beneficial action' and 'karmic benefit' or 'karmic fruitfulness'.*

Th.64 Karma is volition

In Buddhism, things which happen *to one are not 'karma', but they may be the consequence of previous bad or good intentional karma (action) done by one. The nature of an action is seen to reside in the volition or intention that is expressed in the action, and actions include not only overt ones of body or speech, but also sustained thought.*

It is volition, monks, that I call karma. Having willed, one performs an action by body, by speech, by mind.

Nibbedhika Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya III.415, trans. P.H.

Th.65 Your bad actions will catch up with you sooner or later

As long as an evil deed has not ripened, the fool thinks it as sweet as honey.

But when it does ripen, the fool meets with suffering. ...

An evil deed is not like (warm) milk that goes off in a day; it is like a smouldering fire covered in ashes, and follows the fool.

Dhammapada 69 and 71, trans. P.H.

Th.66 One's actions and thoughts determine one's rebirth, not the rituals of others

This passage emphasizes that how a person is reborn is a natural result of their actions, not something that the prayers and rituals of others determines.

Then Asibandhakaputta the headman went to the Blessed One, and having gone there, he paid respect to him and sat on one side. Seated on one side, he said to the Blessed One: 'The brahmins of the western lands, lord, those who carry water pots, wear garlands of water plants, who resort to water (for purification), and worship fire to improve the lot of a dead person, inform them (of their destiny), and send them to heaven. But is the Blessed One, the arahant, the perfectly awakened Buddha capable of doing what would make every person in the world to be born, at the dissolution of the body, after death, in a good destination, a heavenly world?'

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'Very well, then, headman, I will put the question back to you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, headman, here there is a person who destroys life, steals, misconducts himself in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, speaks untruth, engages in divisive speech, harsh speech and idle chatter, has intense desire, is malicious in thought, and holds to wrong views. Then a great crowd of people, coming together and congregating, would pray, praise, and circumambulate with their palms put together saying, "May this person, at the dissolution of the body, after death, be reborn in a good destination, a heavenly world!" What do you think? Would that man, because of the prayers, praise, and circumambulation of that great crowd of people, at the dissolution of the body, after death, be reborn in a good destination, a heavenly world?' 'No, sir.'

'Headman, suppose a person were to throw a hefty boulder into a deep lake of water, and a great crowd of people, coming together and congregating, would pray, praise, and circumambulate with their palms put together saying "Rise up to the surface, O hefty boulder, come floating up, O hefty boulder, float up to the shore, O hefty boulder!" What do you think? Would that hefty boulder, on account of the prayers, praise, and circumambulation of that great crowd of people rise up to the surface, come floating up, or float to the shore?' 'No, sir.'

'So is it with any person who destroys life, ... [etc.] Even though a great crowd of people, coming together and congregating, would pray, praise ... still, at the dissolution of the body, after death, he would be reborn in a woeful state, a bad destiny, the abyss, hell.

Headman, what do you think? Here, there is a person who refrains from destroying life, from stealing ... is not greedy, bearing no thoughts of ill-will, and holding right view. Then a great crowd of people coming together and congregating would pray ... saying "May this person, at the dissolution of the body, after death, be reborn in a woeful state, a bad destiny, the abyss, hell!" Would that person at the dissolution of the body ... on account of the prayers, praise, and circumambulation of that great crowd of people be reborn in a woeful state, a bad destiny, the abyss, hell?' 'No, sir.'

'Suppose a person were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water and break it. There the grains of sand and jar-fragments would go down, while the ghee or oil would come up. If a great crowd of people, coming together and congregating, would pray, praise ... saying, "Sink, O ghee and oil, submerge O ghee and oil, go down, O ghee and oil!" What do you think? Would that ghee and oil, on account of the prayers, praise ... sink, submerge, or go down?' 'No, sir.'

'So is it with any person who refrains from destroying life ... [etc.] Even though a great crowd of people, coming together and congregating, would pray ... saying "May this person, at the dissolution of the body, after death, be reborn in a woeful state, a bad destiny, the abyss, hell!" still, at the dissolution of the body, after death, he would be reborn in a good destination, a heavenly world.'

Asibandhaka-putta Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.312–314, trans. P.D.P.

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Th.67 How past actions lead to differences among people

This passage explains how various bad and good actions lead respectively to rebirth in a hell or a heaven, or to various kinds of bad or good fortune in a future human rebirth. This should not be taken to mean that past karma is the only cause of differences amongst humans, but that it can have a definite influence.

'Good Gotama, due to what cause, dependent on what condition are worse and better states to be seen among those who have become humans, although they are (all) humans? We see humans with a short life-span and with a long life-span, with many ailments and few ailments, ugly and beautiful, weak and powerful, poor and wealthy, of low social class and high social class, foolish and wise. Good Gotama, why are these differences seen among humans?'

'Young man, beings have their actions (karma) as their own, are inheritors of their actions, originate from them, are related to them, have them as their refuge. Actions divide living beings into having worse and better states. ... Here young man, a certain woman or man destroys living beings, is cruel, is with bloody hands, engaged in destroying and hurting living beings without compassion for any beings that have come into existence. That person, on account of that action, performed and undertaken, is born after the dissolution of the body, after death in a woeful state, a bad destiny, the abyss, hell. Instead, if that person comes to the human state, wherever born, he or she has a short life. Young man, destroying living beings, being cruel, having bloody hands, engaging in destroying and causing hurt to living beings without compassion to any beings that have come into existence is a path conducive to a birth with a short life-span.

Young man, here a certain woman or man gives up and abstains from destroying living beings, throws away stick and weapon, is conscientious, compassionate and abides with sympathetic concern for the welfare of all living beings. That person, on account of that action, performed and undertaken, is born after the dissolution of the body, after death in a good destiny, a heavenly world. Instead, if that person comes to the human state, wherever born, he or she has a long life. That path, young man is conducive to having a long life-span.

Young man, here a certain woman or man is of a kind that hurts beings with hands, clods, sticks or weapons. On account of that action, performed and undertaken by that person, ... after death he or she is born in ... hell. Instead, if that person comes to the state of humans, wherever born, he or she suffers many ailments. Young man, this is the path conducive to having many ailments.

Young man, here a certain woman or man is of a kind that does not hurt beings with hands, clods, sticks or weapons. That person, on account of that action performed and undertaken, ... after death, is born in a good destiny, a heavenly world. Instead, if that person comes to the state of humans, wherever born, he or she has few ailments. Young man, this is the path that conduces to having few ailments.

Young man, here a certain woman or man is angry and given to irritability. Even at the slightest remark he or she curses, becomes angry, becomes malicious, reacts with anger, shows hatred, anger and displeasure. That person, on account of that action performed and un-

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dertaken, ... after death is born in ... hell. Instead, if that person comes to the state of humans, wherever born, he or she is born ugly. Young man, this is the path conducive to becoming ugly.

Young man, here a certain woman or man is not angry, is not given to irritability. Even with many (adverse) remarks that person does not curse, does not become angry, does not become malicious and does not react with anger, does not show hatred, anger and displeasure. That person, on account of that action, performed and undertaken is born ... after death ... in a heavenly world. Instead, if that person comes to the state of humans, wherever born, he or she becomes beautiful. Young man, this is the path conducive to becoming beautiful.

Young man, here a certain woman or man has an envious mind, is one who envies, resents and begrudges the gains, respect, honour, veneration and offerings received by others. That person, on account of that action performed and undertaken ... [is reborn in hell or if reborn human] ... becomes less powerful. This is the path conducive to becoming less powerful.

Young man, here a certain woman or man does not have an envious mind, is not one who envies, resents and begrudges the gains, respect, honour, veneration and offerings received by others. That person, on account of that action, performed and undertaken ... [is reborn in a heaven or if reborn human] ... becomes powerful ... This is the path conducive to becoming powerful.

Young man, here a certain woman or man is of a kind that does not make donations to renunciants or brahmins, of food, drinks, clothes, carriages, flowers, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings and illuminations. ... [is reborn in hell or if reborn human] ... becomes a person of little wealth.

Young man, here a certain woman or man is of a kind that makes donations to renunciants or brahmins [is reborn in a heaven or if reborn human] ... becomes a person of great wealth.

Young man, here a certain woman or man is stubborn and conceited and does not revere one who is worthy of reverence, does not stand up with respect for a person whom one should stand up with respect for, does not offer a seat to one who is worthy of a seat, does not give way to one who is worthy of giving way to, does not honour one who is worthy of honour ... [is reborn in hell or if reborn human] ... becomes a person of low social class.

Young man, here a certain woman or man is not stubborn and conceited and reveres one who is worthy of reverence... [is reborn in a heaven or if reborn human] ... becomes a person of high social class.

Young man, here a certain woman or man does not approach a renunciant or brahmin and ask. "Venerable sir, what is wholesome and what is unwholesome? What is wrong and what is right? What should be practised and what should not be practised? Doing what will be for my good and wellbeing for a long time? Or doing what will be for my harm and suffering for a long time?" ... [is reborn in hell or if reborn human] ... becomes one of faulty wisdom.

Young man, here a certain woman or man approaches a renunciant or brahmin and asks. "Venerable sir, what is wholesome and what is unwholesome ...?" ... [is reborn in a heaven or if reborn human] ... becomes one of great wisdom.

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So then young man ..., beings have their actions as their own, are inheritors of their actions, originate from them, are related to them, have them as their refuge. Actions divide living beings into having worse and better states.

Cūḷa-kamma-vibhaṅga Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.203–206, trans. P.D.P.

Th.68 Experiences, and good and bad actions, are not all due to past karma or a God, but nor are they causeless

This passage emphasizes that it is important to take responsibility for one's actions, and not blame them on one's previous karma/actions, or a God, or say that they occur causelessly, such that one has no way to control them.

Monks, there are these three systems of religious teaching which, when closely dealt with, taken up for close scrutiny and discussed thoroughly, finally end up leading to non-(responsibility for action. What three?

There are some renunciants and brahmins who hold the theory and are of the view, 'Whatever this person experiences, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neither unpleasant nor pleasant, all that is on account of actions done in the past.'

There are some renunciants and brahmins who hold the theory and are of the view, 'Whatever this person experiences, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neither unpleasant nor pleasant, all that is, on account of creation by a supreme being.'

There are some renunciants and brahmins who hold the theory and are of the view, 'Whatever this person experiences, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neither unpleasant nor pleasant, all that is on account of no cause or condition.'

Here monks, I approach those renunciants and brahmins who hold the (first) theory and ... ask them. 'Venerable ones, is it true that you hold this theory ...?' When asked, they admit it. Then I tell them: 'Venerable ones, then it is due to their past actions that people become destroyers of life, takers of what is not given, engagers in sexual activity,[289] liars, those who use harsh speech, divisive speech, idle chatter, those with intense desire, malicious minds, and wrong views? For those who fall back on actions done in the past as the essential reality, there is neither interest, nor effort regarding what ought and ought not to be done. When in truth and reality what ought to be done and what ought not to be done are unobtainable by these people who live with lost mindfulness and unprotected, and even the personal designation 'renunciant' is inappropriate (for them). [The same is then said with respect to the other two theories.]

Titthāyatana Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.173–176, trans. P.D.P.

Th.69 Feelings and illnesses are not all due to past karma

This passage critiques the idea that all unpleasant feelings (and illnesses) arise due to past karma. Karma is one possible cause, but the other causes are phys-

289 Inappropriate for renunciants; in lists of wrong bodily actions by laypeople, this is replaced by 'sexual misconduct'.

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ical, environmental, or one's own present inept action or over-exertion. Hence taking the idea of karma in a fatalistic way is wrong.

Sitting on one side, the wandering ascetic Moliya Sīvaka said to the Blessed One: 'Good Gotama, there are some renunciants and brahmins who declare in this way and who hold this view: "Whatever a person experiences, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neither unpleasant nor pleasant, all that is on account of actions (karmas) done in the past." What has good Gotama to say about this?'

'Sīvaka, here certain feelings arise on account of disturbance of bile. It should be understood by oneself that certain feelings arise on account of the disturbance of bile. It is also commonly agreed by people of the world that some feelings arise due to the disturbance of bile. Sīvaka, the renunciants and brahmins, who declare this theory and hold this view, "Whatever feeling this person experiences, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neither unpleasant nor pleasant, all that is due to past actions", miss what they themselves have known, and they miss what people of the world commonly accept as the truth. Therefore, I say this is a wrong view of those renunciants and brahmins.

Sīvaka, certain feelings arise on account of disturbance of phlegm ... wind ... the coming together of these ... the change of seasons ... use of things in wrong ways ... exertion[290] ... *or* born as results of karma.[291] ...

Sīvaka Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.230–231, trans. P.D.P.

A good character can dilute the karmic results of a bad action *Th.70*

This passage explains that the same bad actions do not always have karmic results of the same intensity, for the nature of a generally bad person amplifies the result of a particular bad action, while the nature of a generally good person dilutes the result of the same kind of bad action (cf. M.41).

Monks, someone says: 'In whatever manner a person does an action, in that respective manner he will experience its consequence.' Monks, if that be so, there is no point in living the holy life and there is no room for a complete making an end to suffering. Monks, someone says: 'In whatever manner the (consequence of an) action done by a person is to be experienced, in that respective manner he will experience its consequence.' Monks, if that be so, there is a point in living the holy life and there is room for a complete making an end to suffering.

Here monks, a trifling bad action done by a certain person leads him to hell. Here monks, a similar trifling bad action is done by another person, but (its consequence) is experienced in this life itself: nothing of it is experienced in the life that follows, and the question of any further consequence does not arise.

For what kind of person is it that even doing a trifling bad action leads him to hell? Here monks, a certain person is of uncultivated character, uncultivated ethical discipline, uncultivated mind, uncultivated

290 *Opakkamikāni* probably here means 'exertion' (as this is a possible cause of illness or unpleasant feelings), though it can also mean an 'attack' by another person.

291 At *Aṅguttara-nikāya* V.110, these are given as a list of possible causes of *illness*, rather than 'feelings' (*vedayita*)

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wisdom; he is petty, of a narrow self, and abiding in suffering due to something small. It is in the case of that kind of person that doing even a trifling bad action leads him to hell.

For what kind of person is it that doing a similar trifling bad action has (a consequence) experienced in this life itself, but nothing of it is experienced in the life that follows and the question of any further consequence does not arise? Here monks, a certain person is of cultivated character, cultivated ethical discipline, cultivated mind, cultivated wisdom; he is not petty, has a great self, is abiding in the limitless.[292] In the case of such a person that doing a similar trifling bad action has (a consequence) experienced in this life itself, but nothing of it is experienced in the life that follows and the question of any further consequence does not arise.

Suppose monks, that a person took a pinch of salt and put it in a cup of water – don't you think, monks, that the little water there would be salty and undrinkable?' 'Precisely so, sir, and for what reason? There is little water in the water cup, and with this pinch of salt it will become salty and undrinkable.' 'Suppose, monks, that a person threw a pinch of salt into the river Ganges – would you think, monks, that the river Ganges would become salty from this pinch of salt and become undrinkable?.' 'Not so sir, and for what reason? In this river Ganges there is a great mass of water, and with this pinch of salt it would not become salty and undrinkable.'

'In the same way, monks, a trifling bad action done by a certain person leads him to hell ... and a similar trifling bad action is done by another person but its consequence has the tendency to be experienced in this life itself, and nothing of it is experienced in the life that follows, and the question of any further consequence does not arise.'

Loṇakapallaka Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.249–250, trans. P.D.P.

Th.71 Self-determination of one's rebirth

This passage explains that a person, through the cultivation of virtue and wisdom and a firm resolve, can gain the kind of good rebirth that they aspire for.

'Here monks, any monk lives endowed with faith, learning, liberality, wisdom, and it occurs to him, "Oh, may I be born among the rich men of the ruling class after the dissolution of the body, after death!" He strengthens that thought, he makes it his resolve and develops it, and when his mental activities and ways of living are developed and increasingly cultivated in that manner, it conduces to birth there. This, monks, is the path, the way that conduces to birth there.

Also monks, any monk lives endowed with faith ... and it occurs to him, "Oh, may I be born among rich brahmins ... or among rich householders ... after death." He strengthens that thought ... This, monks, is the path, the way that conduces to birth there.

Also monks, any monk lives endowed with faith ... and it has been heard by him that the gods of the Four Guardian Kings are long lived, possessed of beauty and abundant happiness. It occurs to him, "Oh,

292 Probably meaning the 'limitless' qualities of loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity.

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may I be born among the gods of the Four Guardian Kings ... after death." He strengthens that thought ... This, monks, is the path ... to birth there.[293]

Saṅkhāruppatti Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.99–104, trans. P.D.P.

Karma can mature slowly, and one's view and attitude at the end of one's life is important *Th.72*

The first passage comes after a section which says that those with meditation-based supernormal vision, who see how beings are reborn, should be careful not to over-generalise from their experience. Bad people are often, but not always, reborn in a bad rebirth in their next life; sometimes their rebirth may happen to be a good one. Good people are often, but not always, reborn in a good rebirth in their next life; but sometimes their rebirth may happen to be a bad one. Hence one should not dogmatically assert that all bad people have a bad next rebirth, all good people have a good next rebirth, nor that a person's conduct is irrelevant to their future rebirths. Then this is explained: there may be an opposite kind of past karma that will be what determines a person's next rebirth, or they may change their view of things as they approach death. A bad person may regret their bad actions and resolve that good actions are important – a kind of 'death-bed conversion' – or a good person may meanly regret their good actions – a kind of 'death-bed dis-conversion'. One's bad and good actions will still have their results, but in a life after the next one.

The second passage is given by the Buddha to a banker, who has been a little mean in his offerings and is embarrassed about it. The Buddha reassures him that all acts of goodness and kindness bring results, however small they seem, and that he should not be embarrassed or think that it will not have a good effect in the future.

Now Ānanda, the individual here who destroys living beings, takes of what is not given, misbehaves with regard to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, tells lies, engages in divisive speech, harsh speech, and idle chatter, has intense desire, a malicious mind and is of wrong view – he, after the dissolution of the body, after death, is born in a woeful state, a bad destiny, the abyss, hell. He may either have (also) done an evil deed earlier that has the potential to bring about painful feeling, or he may have done such later, or he may have entertained and observed wrong views at the time of death. Due to this he is born after the dissolution of the body in ... hell. Since he has destroyed living beings, ... and been of wrong view, he will experience their consequences either here and now or in the next birth, or at some later time.

Now Ānanda, the individual who here is a destroyer of living beings ... is born in ... a heavenly world. He may have (also) done a good deed earlier that has the potential to bring about a pleasant feeling, or he may have done it later, or at the time of death he may have entertained and observed right views. Due to this ... he is born in a ... heavenly world. Since he has destroyed living beings, ... and been of wrong view,

293 The same is repeated with reference to rebirth in all the divine realms recognized in the suttas and it is finally said that the same kind of cultivation of mental activities could lead even to the destruction of the intoxicating inclinations that bind one to further rebirths, and the attainment of final liberation.

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he will experience their consequences either here and now or in the next birth, or at some later time.

Now Ānanda, the individual who here abstains from destroying living beings, ... and is of right view is born after the dissolution of the body, after death in a good destiny, a heavenly world. He may have (also) done a good deed earlier that has the potential to bring about a pleasant feeling, or he may have done it later, or at the time of death he may have entertained and observed right views. Due to this ... he is born in a ... heavenly world. Since he has abstained from destroying living beings, ... and been of right view, he will experience their consequences either here and now or in the next birth, or at some later time.

Now Ānanda, the individual who here abstains from, destroying living beings, taking what is not given ... and is of right view after the dissolution of the body, after death is born in ... hell. He may either have (also) done an evil deed earlier that has the potential to bring about painful feeling, or he may have done such later, or he may have entertained and observed wrong views at the time of death. Due to this he is born at the dissolution of the body in ... hell. Since he has abstained from destroying living beings... and been of wrong view, he will experience their consequences either here and now or in the next birth, or at some later time.

Mahā-kamma-vibhaṅga Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.214–215, trans. P.D.P.

Do not disregard karmic benefit and think 'it will not come to me'.
Even by the falling of drops of water, a water pot is filled.
Just so the wise man is also filled with karmic benefit,
Even though he gathers it little by little.

Dhammapada 122, trans. P.H.

The implications of karma and rebirth for attitudes to others

Th.73 **You too have experienced this**

This passage emphasizes that, in some past life, one must have experienced similar things to the bad and good experiences that others now have. Hence fellow-feeling for those who suffer, and non-attachment to good experience, is wise.

Monks, this wandering from life to life is without a discoverable beginning. Of living beings running around and wandering around in the cycle, a first beginning is not discerned. When you see someone who has fallen on hard times, overwhelmed with hard times, you should conclude: 'We, too, have experienced just this sort of thing in the course of that long, long time.' ...

When you see someone who is happy and fortunate, you should conclude: 'We, too, have experienced just this sort of thing in the course of that long, long time.' ...

Duggataṃ and *Sukhitaṃ Suttas: Saṃyutta-nikāya* II.186–167, trans. P.H.

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Meeting again with those who have been good to one in past lives *Th.74*

This passage emphasizes how one has been parted from relatives in countless past lives. Hence one should not want any more rebirths. It also implies that most beings one meets have probably been good to one, as a close relative, in some past life, so that one should be good to them now – even if they now cause one suffering.

Monks, this wandering from life to life is without a discoverable beginning. It is not easy to find a being who has not been your mother at one time in the past, ... a being who has not been your father ... your brother ... sister... son... daughter at one time in the past. ... Long have you thus experienced pain, experienced anguish, experienced disaster, and the swelling of cemeteries – enough to become disenchanted with all conditioned things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.

Six *suttas* on relatives: *Saṃyutta-nikāya* II.189, trans. P.H.

This life and all rebirths entail ageing, sickness and death

Nothing that is conditioned is permanent *Th.75*

This verses is said to have been uttered by the god Sakka on the death of the Buddha. It is often cited at Buddhist funerals.

Impermanent indeed are conditioned things,
Their nature is to arise and decay.
Having arisen, they cease:
Happy is their stilling.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.157, trans. G.A.S.

'Monks, you may hold on to whatever object of grasping which is permanent, everlasting, eternal and having the nature of not changing. Monks, do you indeed *see* such an object of grasping?' 'No, venerable sir.' 'Good! I do not see one either.'

Alagaddūpama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.137, trans. P.D.P.

The frailties of human life *Th.76*

In this passage, an arahant *who had come from a wealthy family illustrates to a king the frailties of human life.*

'Great king, there are four expoundings of the Dhamma expounded by the Blessed One ... The first is that the world is unstable and is moving towards its end. The second is that the world is lacking in any protection or an overlord. The third is that the world cannot be owned by oneself, and one has to go leaving behind everything. The fourth is that the world is deficient and enslaved to unfulfilled craving.'

'Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said that the world is unstable and is moving towards its end. How should the meaning of what was said be understood?' 'Great king, was there a time when you were twenty or twenty-five years old when you were expert in riding elephants, horses, chariots, (in handling) the bow and the sword, having strong legs and arms, able and skilled in warfare?' 'Yes, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla. I was

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like that, and I was even inspired at times and did not see any one comparable to my strength.' 'What do you think, great king, are you the same now?' 'Not indeed Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, now I am worn, old, have reached the end of life and have lived my life-span. I am now eighty years old. On some occasions, thinking of stepping in one direction I step in another direction.' 'It is on account of this that the Blessed One has said that the world is unstable....'

'Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, in this royal family there are squadrons of elephants, horses, chariots and infantry. They would come to our help in case of any emergency. Venerable Raṭṭhapāla says that the world is lacking in protection or an overlord. How is the meaning of this to be understood?' 'Great king, what do you think? Do you have any chronic illness?' 'I have, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla. Sometimes friends and ministers, kith and kin stand round me thinking, "Now the Kuru king will pass away".' 'What do you think about this, great king? Could you have the expectation: "Let my friends and ministers, kith and kin come together and share my pain so that my pain will become lighter or do you yourself have to experience that pain?".' 'Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, I myself have to experience that pain.' 'It is on account of this that the Blessed One has said that the world is lacking in any protection'

Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, in this royal family is found plenty of gold coins and gold both in the ground (below) and in the sky (above). But Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said that the world cannot be owned by oneself and one has to go leaving behind everything. How should the meaning of this that was spoken be seen?' 'What do you think great king? Now you move about having fulfilment in the five strands of sensual pleasure and endowed with them. Will you be in a position to say later also, "I am moving about having fulfilment in the five strands of sensual pleasure and endowed with them", or will others take over this wealth, and you will pass on (at death) in accordance with your karma?' 'I will not be in such a position Venerable Raṭṭhapāla. Others will take over this wealth and I will pass on in accordance with my karma.' 'It is on account of this that the Blessed One has said that the world cannot be owned by oneself, and one has to go leaving behind everything.'

'Venerable Raṭṭhapāla said that the world is deficient and enslaved by unfulfilled craving. How should the meaning of this that was spoken be seen?' 'What do you think, great king? Do you dwell in this Kuru (land) which is prosperous?' 'Yes Venerable Raṭṭhapāla. I dwell in Kuru which is prosperous.' 'What do you think, great king? Supposing a person who is trustworthy and reliable should come to you from the eastern direction and should tell you, "Great king, please know that I come from the eastern direction and that I have seen there a huge settlement of people, wealthy and prosperous, densely populated and full of people ... and it is possible to conquer it with such and such a force. Great king, conquer it." What would you do then?' 'Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, I would conquer and dwell in that region too.' 'Great king, it is on account of this that the Blessed One has said that the world is deficient and enslaved by unfulfilled craving.'

Raṭṭhapāla Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya II.70–73, trans. P.D.P.

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Accept the inevitability of death *Th.77*

This passage emphasizes that death is known to be inevitable: so what is the use of grieving when it arrives?

The life of mortals here is unpredictable and uncertain.
It is difficult, short, and also mixed with suffering.

There is no means by which those who are born would not die.
They come to decay, and then death. Living beings certainly are of this nature.

Just as for ripe fruits, there is fear of fall in the early morning,
Likewise, for one born mortal, there is constant fear of death.

Just as all clay pots made by the potter get destroyed in the end,
so it is with the life of mortals.

Children and the grown up, fools and the wise,
Everyone, goes under the sway of death, everyone is overcome by death.

To those destined to die when going to the next world, neither the father protects the son, nor a relative, (other) relatives.

Look how, as relatives look on and lament,
one by one mortals are led away like cattle for slaughter!

Thus the world is afflicted with death and decay.
Therefore the wise, knowing this nature of the world, do not grieve.

Whose path of arrival or departure is not known,
Not seeing either end, one laments for him in vain.

If a deluded person's wailing were to obtain any benefit,
inflicting injury on himself, a wise person would do it too.

By crying and grief he does not attain to peace of mind.
It would lead to exceeding sorrow for him and inflict harm on the body.

Inflicting self-harm, he becomes thin and of bad appearance.
By it the dead are not protected and wailing is futile.

A person, who does not abandon sorrow, comes to more suffering.
Bewailing the dead, one comes under the sway of grief.

Look at others too, on their journey (to death), who reach according to their actions.
Living beings coming to the sway of death here do indeed tremble.

Through whatever one seeks an identity (for oneself), it becomes something other than that.[294] Loss is like that – see the nature of the world.

Even if a young man lives a hundred years or more,
he suffers the loss of the circle of relatives, and he gives up his life here.

Therefore, having listened to the words of the arahant, seeing a dead departed person, put away the wailing (and think) 'He is unobtainable by me'.

Just as a house on fire is put out with the help of water, likewise the wise, insightful, learned, skilled person would quickly dispel the grief that is born, like the wind a tuft of cotton wool.

Wailings and longings and one's unhappiness are (like an) arrow (sticking) in one; these should be drawn out by one who seeks his own happiness.

The arrow withdrawn, unattached and having gained peace of mind,

294 This is to show that although we expect things to be stable, unchanging and continuing as 'mine', they never remain as such.

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having overcome all grief, one becomes free of sorrow and (with the fire of craving) quenched.

Salla Sutta: Sutta-nipāta 574–593, trans. P.D.P.

Th.78 How the search for sensual pleasures leads to suffering

This passage, after talking of the greater joy and happiness in meditative calm, points out the perils and disadvantages of chasing after sexual and other sensual pleasures, as laypeople often do: the stresses of making a living, of failures in this, of loss of the products of one's labour, quarrels and wars over possessions, robbery and the punishments that may lead to, and a bad rebirth arising from misconduct prompted by attachment to sensual pleasures.

Mahānāma, even though it is clearly seen by a disciple of the noble one as it has really come to be with proper insight that sensual pleasures have little satisfaction, but much suffering, much distress and that the dangers therein are many, until they attain joy and ease apart from sensual desires and apart from unwholesome states, or something more peaceful than that,[295] they do not cease reverting to sensual pleasures. ... Mahānāma, what is the satisfaction in sensual pleasures?

There are these five strands of sensual pleasure. What five? There are visible forms discernible by the eye, likable, lovely, pleasant, beautiful, associated with sensual desires, and enticing ... sounds discernible by the ear ... smells discernible by the nose... tastes discernible by the tongue ... tactile sensations discernible by the body. Whatever pleasure and happiness arise on account of these five strands of sensual pleasures, that is the satisfaction in sensual pleasures.

Mahānāma, what is the danger in sensual pleasures? Here a child of good family would have to make a living by some occupation[296] ... undergoing cold and heat, suffering from harm resulting from contact of gadflies and mosquitoes, touch of the wind, heat and snakes, risking dying of hunger and thirst. This is a danger of sensual pleasures here and now, a bundle of suffering owing to sensual pleasures, springing from sensual pleasures, on account of sensual pleasures and due to nothing but sensual pleasures.

This child of good family, though striving and exerting, may (sometimes) not produce wealth. Then they grieve and lament, cry beating the chest, and come to bewilderment thinking, 'My effort was useless, my endeavour was fruitless.' This too is a danger of sensual pleasures ... (Sometimes) when this child of good family strives and exerts, wealth is produced. They experience suffering and mental distress on account of the need to protect their wealth thinking, 'May my wealth not be taken over by kings, carried away by thieves, consumed by fire, washed away by flood-water or taken by unliked heirs.' As they guard and protect their wealth, it is in this manner taken over by kings ... Then they grieve ... thinking 'Whatever I had, even that is no more for me'.

Again Mahānāma, owing to sensual pleasures ... kings dispute with kings, those of the ruling class dispute with those of the ruling class,

295 That is, attains at least the first meditative absorption, in which joy and easeful happiness pervade the body.

296 In order to have the things he wants, and support a wife and family.

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those of the priestly class dispute with those of the priestly class, householders dispute with householders, a mother disputes with a son, a son disputes with a mother, a father disputes with a son, a son disputes with a father, a brother disputes with a brother, a friend disputes with a friend. In this case they engage in quarrels, conflicts, disputations, and attack one another with hands, clods, sticks, and weapons. There they meet with death and deadly pain ... Again Mahānāma owing to sensual pleasures they take sword and shield, arm themselves with bow and arrow and two sides advance towards battle. When arrows are shot, javelins are thrown, and swords are flashed like lightening, they get pierced by arrows, pierced by javelins, and they cut heads with the swords. There they meet with death and deadly pain.

Again owing to sensual pleasures ... robbers break into houses, plunder, rob, stay in ambush, go to others' wives. The kings catch them and punish them in various ways. They get them caned and whipped, flogged with the jungle rope, flogged with the soiled stick. Their hands are chopped off, legs are chopped off ... immersed in boiling oil, they are given to the dogs to be eaten, raised on a pike alive until death, and their neck is cut with the sword.[297] This too is a the danger of sensual pleasures here and now, a bundle of pain owing to sensual pleasures.

Again, Mahānāma, owing to sensual pleasures ... they misbehave in body, in words and mind, and having done so, after death they are born in the woeful state, in a bad destiny, in the abyss in hell. This is a danger of sensual pleasures hereafter, a bundle of suffering.

Cūla-dukkha-kkhandha Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.91–92, trans. P.D.P.

MAHĀYĀNA

Our universe

A vision of the universe *M.39*

This passage gives a vision of the universe as a vast array of world-systems, in some of which dwell Buddhas.

At that time, bodhisattva Samantabhadra addressed the assembly of bodhisattvas, 'Children of the Buddha, these oceans of perfumed water, as numerous as the specks of dust in innumerable Buddha-fields, spread out like Indra's net, are established in the oceans of the world-systems arrayed in an orderly manner in the shape of the calyx of a lotus.

Children of the Buddha, in the innermost centre is the ocean of perfumed water named the Infinite Light of the Wondrous Lotus. In its depths lies the treasure which is the King of Jewels, in which the images of all bodhisattvas can be seen. A great lotus called the King of All Fragrant Jewels emerged from this ocean. On this lotus is the world-system called the Light of the Blazing Treasure Which Illuminates Everything in the Ten Directions of Space, which is composed of all

297 In ancient India, kings sometimes used horrendous punishments – as those in the West sometimes did, too.

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kinds of adornments. As many worlds as there are specks of dust in innumerable Buddha-fields are arrayed there. Beneath it there is the world-system called Supreme Radiance Which Illuminates Everything, surrounded by a glorious ring of vajras[298] and resting on lotus flowers made of various kinds of precious substances. It is shaped like a precious jewel, and covered by clouds of lotus flowers made of precious substances. It is surrounded by as many worlds as there are specks of dust in a Buddha-field, and all are appropriately arrayed and adorned. A Buddha called Spotless Lamp of Pure Vision dwells there.

Above it, as many worlds away as there are specks of dust in a Buddha-field, there is a world called Adorned with Many Different Kinds of Wondrous Fragrant Lotuses. It is surrounded by all kinds of adornments, and rests on a network of lotuses made of precious substances. It is shaped like a lion-throne, and covered by clouds of multi-coloured jewelled canopies. It is surrounded by as many worlds as there are specks of dust in two Buddha-fields. A Buddha called Lion of Blazing Light dwells there. ... [descriptions of seventeen other marvellous world-systems follow, with a Buddha dwelling in each, and each surrounded by an increasing number of other worlds.]

Above that again, as many worlds away as there are specks of dust in a Buddha-field, there is a world-system called Flame of the Wondrous Jewel. It is surrounded by Jewels of the Universal Radiance of the Sun and the Moon, and rests on the ocean of the King of Jewels in the Form of All the Gods. It is shaped like a precious jewel, and covered by a network of precious jewelled lamps and clouds of banners adorned with precious substances. It is surrounded by as many worlds as there are specks of dust in twenty Buddha-fields, and it is completely pure. A Buddha called Radiance of Beneficial Karma and Virtue dwells there.'

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, pp.42b23–c09,
trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Karma

M.40 Death does not end the influence of karma

The first passage criticises the view that, as it sees a phenomenon as existing separately for a time, then 'causing' another such phenomenon, actually denies causal continuity, so as to wrongly imply that present phenomena have no causal effect, including actions (karma) having no effect on the future. The second emphasizes that one's karma produces results in the future.

Mahāmati, there are some renunciants and brahmins who believe that things arise after not having existed. They claim that an object is a manifestation of cause and effect, that it exists in time, that the categories of existence, the elements, and the sense-bases arise and continue to exist on the basis of conditioning factors, and they believe that having existed, they cease to exist. They say, Mahāmati, that causal connections, the arising of actions, the breaking down of actions, the existence of actions, nirvana, the path, the fruits of actions, and truth

298 Symbols representing the thunderbolt-power of the awakened mind.

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are all destroyed and come to an end. Why is this? It is because these things are not directly perceptible and because their origin cannot be seen.

Mahāmati, a broken bowl cannot function as a bowl, and a burnt seed cannot sprout. In the same way, Mahāmati, if the categories of existence, the elements, and the sense-bases appear to exist, to cease, to be made to cease, or to be destined to cease, one is only seeing the conceptualizations of one's own mind. There is no causation, only the uninterrupted flow of conceptualizations.

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, ch.2, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

I always teach emptiness, which eludes eternity and destruction. Saṃsāra is like a dream, an illusion – but actions do not disappear.

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, ch.2, v.135, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The flexible workings of karma *M.41*

This passage explains that gifts to those who are more spiritually developed,[299] *to one's parents, or to the sick, bring greater benefits as a karmic effects than gifts to others. Moreover, a person can reduce the karmic results of unwholesome actions by discerning wisdom (as in Th.70). The negative karmic effects of actions performed by a wise person come in this life, in a lighter form, rather than in a later life and in a more weighty form. The wise even go beyond the limitations of beneficial karma, as without deep wisdom, even beneficial karma keeps one within* saṃsāra. *Karmic effects do not arise in a fixed, mechanical way that identically matches the nature and situation of the actions which generated them, but arise more flexibly, due to a subtle interaction of factors, which allows for the spiritual development of the holy life. Moreover, the Buddha, when he was a* bodhisattva, *even chose to be reborn in hell, to teach beings there.*

Siṃhanāda said to the Buddha, '... What does it mean, Blessed One, when it is said in the sūtras that the karmic fruit that comes from giving to an animal is a hundred times greater than what was given; that the karmic fruit that comes from giving to someone who is overpowered by desire[300] is a thousand times greater than what was given; that the karmic fruit that comes from giving to someone who observes the precepts is hundred thousand times greater than what was given; that the karmic fruit that comes from giving to a non-Buddhist who has rid himself of the defilements is incalculable; that the karmic fruit that comes from giving to the four kinds of individuals who practise the path or who have attained its fruit,[301] up to a solitary-buddha, is even more abundantly incalculable; that the karmic fruit that comes from giving to irreversible bodhisattvas, to bodhisattvas in their final existence, or to a Tathāgata, a Buddha, is beyond measure, without limit, incalculable and inconceivable. When does someone who acquires such measureless, endless karmic benefit attain unsurpassed perfect awakening?

Blessed One, it is also said in the sūtras, "Anyone who acts in whole-

299 As also at *Majjhima-nikāya* III.254–255, with small differences of detail.

300 An *icchantika*, or 'cut off' type, a person only able to attain awakening with great difficulty (see also V.1).

301 Those on the path to or attained to being a stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner or *arhant*: see passage Th.201.

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some or unwholesome ways will undoubtedly experience the fruit of those actions in his current existence, in his next existence, or in the existence after that. Perform wholesome actions with respect, Cunda. These actions will undoubtedly have an effect." If they have an effect, how can someone who performs such actions attain unsurpassed perfect awakening? How can he realize his Buddha-nature?[302]

Moreover, Blessed One, it is said in the sūtras that the karmic fruit of giving to the sick, to one's parents, or to a Tathāgata is inexhaustible. Again, Blessed One, it is stated in the sūtras that the Buddha said to Ānanda that any being who did not act within the realm of sensual desire would attain unsurpassed perfect awakening. The same applies to actions performed in the realm of form and the formless realm. Blessed One, as it is said in the verses of the *Dharmapada*:[303]

Not in the sky, nor in the ocean, nor inside a mountain cave,
there is nowhere one can escape from the effects of one's actions. ...

If this were so, how could anyone realize their Buddha-nature, and attain unsurpassed perfect awakening?'

The Buddha said, 'Excellent. Excellent, son of good family. There are only two kinds of people who acquire the benefits of wholesome actions, benefits which are immeasurable ... benefits which can ... set in motion the unsurpassed Wheel of the Dharma of the Tathāgata. The first such person is one who asks good questions, the second is one who gives good answers.

Son of good family, among the Buddha's ten powers, the power of karma is the most profound. Son of good family, some living beings who do not think clearly do not have faith in the causal nature of action. In order to rescue them, I formulated this saying: Son of good family, all actions are either light or weighty, and each in turn has either a fixed result or a variable result. Someone might say, "unwholesome actions do not yield fruit. If unwholesome actions always yield fruit, how could Aṅgulimāla[304] have attained liberation?" This is why you should be aware that the fruit of actions which have been performed can be either fixed or variable. It is in order to eliminate this kind of wrong view that it is stated in a sūtra, "No action which has been performed fails to yield fruit." Son of good family, there may be weighty actions that appear light; and there may be light actions that appear weighty. It is undoubtedly the case that all people are either wise or foolish. Therefore, you should know that not every action undoubtedly yields fruit, and that the fruit of actions may be either fixed or variable.

Son of good family, all living beings fall into two categories: the wise and the foolish. The wise, by the power of their wisdom, might be able to transform a weighty action which would have led them to hell into an action with a light result in this life. The foolish may transform a light action performed in this life into one with a weighty result, leading to hell.'

Siṃhanāda said, 'If this is the case, one should not aspire to the holy

302 That is, will he not just continue experiencing the effects of his wholesome actions within *saṃsāra*?

303 Cf. *Dhammapada* v.128.

304 The robber and murderer Aṅgulimāla – see passage L.45.

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life and the fruit of liberation.' The Buddha said, 'Son of good family, if all actions definitely yield fruit, then of course one should not aspire to the holy life and the fruit of liberation. However, because this is not definite, one can aspire to the holy life and the fruit of liberation.

Son of good family, someone who can discard all unwholesome actions will acquire beneficial karmic fruit. If one does away with wholesome actions, however, the outcome will be bad. If all actions definitely yielded fruit, one could not aspire to follow the noble path. If the noble path were not followed, there would be no liberation. The noble ones follow the path because they intend to turn actions with fixed results into those which result in light karmic fruit, and because actions which do not have fixed results will not yield fruit. If all actions yielded fruit, they might not follow the noble path. Yet if anyone were to fail to practise the path, there is no way they could attain liberation; and someone who has not attained liberation cannot enter nirvana.

Son of good family, if the results of all actions were fixed, wholesome actions that had been performed throughout one's entire life would result in a permanent experience of peace. Every unwholesome action too, no matter how small, that had been performed throughout one's entire life, would lead to great and ceaseless suffering. If that were the meaning of action and its fruit, there would be no practice of the path, no liberation, no nirvana. If one acted like a human being, one would end up as a human being. If one acted like a brahmin, one would end up as a brahmin. There would be no lower classes, no lower people. Common people would always remain common people, brahmins would remain forever brahmins. Actions performed at a younger age might only bear fruit at an early age. Actions performed in old age might only have their effects in old age. Unwholesome actions that led to hell performed in old age might not affect a young hell-being until he became old. If people did not kill in old age, they could not expect to experience the result of longevity whilst they were still young. If there were no expectancy of a long life in youth, how could people reach old age, because one cannot change the results of actions? If actions were unchangeable, how could one practise the Path and reach nirvana?

Son of good family, there are two kinds of actions, fixed and not fixed. There are two kinds of fixed actions, one yields a fixed kind of fruit, the other yields its fruit at a fixed time. There are certain actions that yield a fixed kind of fruit, but not at a fixed time. They yield their fruit whenever the conditions are favourable. Some yield their fruit at three times: in the present life, in the next life and in the one after that.

Son of good family, if someone performs unwholesome actions or wholesome actions with a resolute mind, if he believes profoundly in what he has done and is pleased with it, or if he takes a vow as an act of worship to the Three Jewels: these actions are said to be fixed.

Son of good family, the roots of the wholesome actions of the wise are deeply fixed, and hard to move, so that they can transform weighty actions so that they yield a light karmic fruit. The wholesome roots of the foolish are not deeply fixed, so they might transform their light actions such that they yield a weighty karmic fruit. For this reason, not all karma is not considered to be fixed.

The bodhisattva, the great being, performs no actions which will lead

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him to hell. He only takes a vow to be reborn in hell in order to help living beings there. Son of good family, in the distant past, when people lived as long as a hundred years, innumerable living beings suffered the results of their actions in hell. When I saw this, I immediately made a vow to be reborn as a hell-being. At that time, the bodhisattva had in reality performed no unwholesome actions. He only suffered the fruit of hell in order to help living beings. I spent countless years in hell, where I expounded and explained the twelve divisions of the sacred scriptures to the hell-beings. When they heard the Dharma, they shed the horrible results of their previous unwholesome actions, and hell became empty, apart from those who were overpowered by desire.

Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 374, ch.38, p.549b29–50b18, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.42 How to reduce bad karmic results

This passage offers hope for change.

Someone who trains their body, trains themselves in ethical discipline, trains their mind in meditation, trains themselves in wisdom, and who knows that wholesome or unwholesome actions will undoubtedly have an effect, may be able to transform weighty actions into light ones, and even alleviate the effects of light unwholesome actions. If they are fortunate enough to meet a spiritual friend, a field of karmic fruitfulness,[305] who practises the Path and who performs wholesome deeds, they might be able to transfer the effects of weighty actions, effects that would ordinarily be experienced in one's next life, such that they are experienced in their present life.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.24, p.1070c13–16, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Precious human birth

M.43 The rarity of a human rebirth, and of meeting with the teaching of a Buddha

Monks, it is difficult to encounter a Buddha in the world. It is difficult to be born as a human being. ... It is like searching through sand for gold, or searching for the uḍumbara flower.[306] Monks, now that you have all attained a human form, and avoided the eight kinds of unfavourable circumstances,[307] now that you have seen me, do not let your lives pass by in vain.

Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 374, ch.3, p.376b16–20, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

When a young man thinks about harming others, when he denounces them, criticises them, defames them, insults them, ridicules them and slanders them, he should feel ashamed, and should immediately make

305 A person who is very spiritually developed, so that gifts given to them yield abundant good karmic fruit.

306 *Ficus racemosa*, said in Buddhist mythology to blossom only once every 3000 years.

307 Which prevent one from encountering the Buddha, and hearing his teachings.

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a public apology with no ill-will, bearing the following in mind, 'I have obtained a human body, something which is difficult to obtain. How can I cultivate such evil, and waste this wonderful opportunity?'

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol. 6, text 220, pp.731c25–732a01, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

(Supportive spiritual) circumstances such as these, in which people can achieve their goals, are very difficult to obtain.

If one does not reflect on the benefits they bring, who knows when one will encounter them again?

Bodhicaryāvatāra I.4, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Impermanence

The ephemeral nature of things *M.44*

This passage sums up the insubstantial, impermanent nature of things that we grasp at. Life is short, and soon flashes by.

You should see what is conditioned as
a shooting star, a defect of vision, a lamp,
an illusion, frost, a bubble,
a dream, or a thunder-cloud.[308]

Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, section 32, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

No permanent material elements *M.45*

This passage criticises non-Buddhist ideas of impermanence, which hold that material elements are eternal, and that only the forms composed of them are impermanent. Further than this, it sees reality as mind-only, such that even the idea of impermanent material elements is a mental projection.

Those who hold the view of impermanence which is known as 'the cessation of external forms' state that the elements are not destroyed when dissolution occurs. According to this view, Mahāmati, when one examines things at the atomic level, dissolution does not involve the destruction of the elements, but of their external forms, which can change to become, for example, long or short. At the atomic level, nothing is destroyed – only the external forms cease to exist. This is the wrong view which the (Hindu) Sāṃkhya school has fallen into. ...

For me though, Mahāmati, there is no permanence and no impermanence. Why is this? Because I do not concede that external objects exist, because I teach that the triple world[309] consists only of the mind, and because I do not teach that things possess a variety of different characteristics, no distinction between the states of existence of the great elements[310] arises or ceases in me. No dualism characterised by perceiver and perceived, and involving the conceptualisation of the existence of elements, arises in me. ...

308 This verse can be interpreted in two ways: that the conditioned should been seen as being like a shooting star etc., or that one should view the conditioned in the same way as one would view a shooting star etc.

309 That is, the entirety of conditioned existence: see 'three realms' in Glossary.

310 Earth, water, fire, and wind

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It is said that:

118. Deluded non-Buddhists form mental constructions of impermanence as origination and cessation, as changes in external forms, as existence, and as form.

119. Things are not really destroyed, the elements themselves remain. Enveloped by a plethora of wrong views, non-Buddhists form mental constructions of permanence.

120. For these non-Buddhists, there is no destruction or origination. The elements themselves are permanent, so how can one form a mental construction of impermanence?

121. There is nothing but the mind itself. All dualism in the mind arises because of the existence of perceiver and perceived. There is no essential self, and nothing which possesses an essential self.

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, ch.3, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA

Precious human birth

V.14 The precious nature of human life

The first thing to be known about human life is that it is a rare opportunity to practise the Dharma. The pains of human existence along with recognition of its impermanence are sufficient, for the discerning, to induce disillusionment with saṃsāra*, while they are still moderate enough (compared to those of the lower realms) to allow for engagement with the spiritual path. The following passage from the second chapter of 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation' of Gampopa (1079–1153) presents the factors constituting a 'precious human life'.*

One may ask, 'If all sentient beings have the Buddha-nature,[311] then can the five types of beings other than humans[312] – such as hell beings, hungry ghosts, and so forth – attain Buddhahood right away?' The answer is no, because it is only a person having a 'precious human life' that is endowed with both freedom (to practise) and connection (with the Dharma) as well as the three types of faith[313] who is in a good position to attain Buddhahood. ...

Freedom means being free from the eight kinds of unfavourable circumstances, which are listed thus in the 'Recollection of the Sublime Dharma Sūtra': 'Being born as a hell-being, a hungry ghost, an animal, a barbarian, or as a long-life god, or among people with wrong views, or in a world without a Buddha, or as someone with a learning disability – these are the eight unfavourable circumstances.' 'Why are they unfavourable?' one may ask. It is because hell-beings experience constant pain, hungry ghosts are tortured by insatiable craving, and animals are generally too stupid, and none of those three types of beings have any shame or inhibition, and so they have no opportunity to

311 *Buddha-garbha* or *Tathāgata-garbha*, the potential for attaining Buddhahood: see V.1

312 The demi-gods are not counted as a separate realm from the gods, when there are said to be five realms instead of six.

313 See V.24.

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practise the Dharma. So-called 'long-life gods' abide in an unconscious state,[314] and because the continuity of their consciousness has ceased upon entering that state, they have no opportunity to practise the Dharma. Furthermore, neither do gods of the realm of sensual desire have that opportunity because compared to a human's, the life of a god is long. Moreover, all divine births are unfavourable because, due to (their inhabitants') attachment to their temporary pleasures, they do not lend any opportunity for striving at what is wholesome. That is why there is so much virtue in this trifling human pain of the present. (Wise reflection on) it arouses disenchantment with saṃsāra, pacifies our arrogance, generates in us compassion for sentient beings, and makes us shun unwholesome action and find pleasure in doing the wholesome. That is also what is said in (Śāntideva's) 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening' (*Bodhicaryāvatāra,* BCA VI.21), 'Furthermore, the virtues of pain are that it dispels haughtiness through disenchantment, generates compassion for sentient beings in saṃsāra, makes us avoid what is unwholesome and delight in the wholesome'. Thus we have explained why those four types of beings do not have freedom to practise the Dharma.

Although a human birth, being born as a barbarian is unfavourable because it makes it very difficult for one to meet with a holy person (who could teach the Dharma). Having wrong views is unfavourable because they do not see the wholesome as something that causes one to attain higher rebirth and liberation. Being born in a world which is without a Buddha is unfavourable because there is nobody to tell one what is to be done and what not to be done. And a person with learning difficulties cannot by himself tell the difference between teachings well-explained and badly explained. Thus, when one is free from all of those eight unfavourable circumstances, one has what is called 'perfect freedom' (to practise for Buddhahood).

There are ten kinds of connection (with the Dharma) – five from one's own side and five from the side of others. The five connections from one's own side are, as said, 'Being born as a human, in a central country, with one's senses intact, not having committed wrong action, and having correct faith.' What do these mean? Being born as a human means sharing the fate of a human being having either male or female sexual organs. Being born in a central country means being born in a place where one can rely on holy persons. Having one's senses intact means not being dumb or stupid, and so having the opportunity to practise the wholesome Dharma. Having correct faith means having faith in the Dharma and Vinaya[315] taught by the Buddha as a foundation of all wholesome qualities. Not, in this lifetime, having committed wrong action means not to have committed any of the acts with immediate bad karmic consequences.[316]

314 This refers to only *one* type of the *brahmā* gods of the elemental form worlds (see 'three realms' in Glossary).

315 Monastic discipline.

316 Any of the five types of action entailing that one's next rebirth will definitely be in a hell: killing one's mother or father, or an *arhant*, shedding the blood of a Buddha, or causing a schism in the Sangha.

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The five connections from the side of others are the arrival of a Buddha into the world (where one is born), his teaching of the holy Dharma, the sustained presence of his teachings, the existence of the teachings' followers, and their compassionate activity for the sake of others. Thus, someone having all those ten connections from both one's own side and the side of others has what is called 'perfect connection'. Thus, a 'precious human life' is one in which both the freedoms and the connections have been assembled. And why is it called 'precious'?, one may ask. Because it is similar to a precious wish-fulfilling jewel, which is called 'precious' due to its being difficult to find and due to its being highly beneficial.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.17–20, trans. T.A.

V.15 The difficulty of finding a precious human birth: an example

*This passage speaks for itself. A similar idea is also expressed in Theravāda texts (*Saṃyutta-nikāya *V.455–57).*

The Blessed One has said that to obtain a human birth is even more difficult than for a turtle to put its neck from below through the opening of a yoke floating on the ocean stirred up by enormous waves ... Nāgārjuna expresses this in his 'Advice to King Gautamīputra': 'Ruler of Humans! It is far more difficult for an animal to attain human rebirth than for a turtle to hit the opening of a yoke floating on the ocean. So reap the fruit (of human birth) by practising the holy Dharma!'

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.47–8, trans. T.A.

V.16 Quintessential Elixir: life is short, so do not neglect compassionate practice!

This text is a concise formulation of the entire path, made in terms of 'parting from the four attachments', a principal teaching of the Sakyapa school of Tibetan Buddhism. It belongs to the genre of 'mind training' verses to be recited on a regular basis in order to purify one's motivations and mental attitudes. It was authored by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1829–1870)*, a prominent nineteenth century representative of the Sakyapa school, founder of the non-sectarian Ri-may movement. Its full title* is *'Mind Training: An Experiential Song of Parting from the Four Attachments'.*

Through the blessings of the noble Guru Mañjughoṣa,
May all beings throughout space practise the holy Dharma,
May they clarify their confusion by enjoying the path of Dharma,
And may all their delusions arise (as empty) in the expanse of Dharma!

Though we have attained a precious human life so difficult to find,
If we cling to this life, we are not Dharma-practitioners;
Since nothing lasts for a moment and we are going to die,
Let us try to avoid evil and perform wholesome actions!

Though our minds may have turned towards the holy Dharma,
If we cling to the three realms, we lack determination;
So let us develop an uncontrived wish to break free
From saṃsāra which is basically nothing but suffering!

Though we might seek our own peace and ease through the Dharma,

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If we cling to our own well-being, we are not bodhisattvas;
So let us practise loving kindness, compassion, and awakening-mind[317]
For sentient beings' sakes, who have all been our kind parents!
Though we may have developed relative awakening-mind,
If we have grasping, we do not have the view (of emptiness);
So let us carry on to the sphere of freedom from conceptual obsession,[318]
In order to uproot our belief in Self!
By the virtue of composing this song of experiencing
The elixir of instruction given by the Noble Mañjughoṣa
To the glorious and benevolent Sachen Kunga Nyingpo,[319]
May all sentient beings, my mothers, quickly attain awakening!

'Mind Training: An Experiential Song of Parting from the Four Attachments', trans. T.A.

The pains of *saṃsāra*

A warning against being infatuated with your youth — V.17

This passage on the pains of ageing, sickness and death form part of Milarepa's admonishments to a physician called Yang nge and his circle of friends.[320]

All of you friends, who are here, please listen to these words.

When you are young and vigorous, you never think of getting older, but ageing approaches slowly and steadily, like a seed growing underground.

When all the five elements of the body flourish, you never think of getting sick, but sickness descends on you firmly and forcefully, like something that shatters your mind.

When the appearances of this life seem so solid, you never think of your impending death, but death may strike you down suddenly, like a thunderbolt.

The three pains of ageing, sickness and death are always within reach, like your hand and mouth. Like a watchman over a mountain-pass, the Lord of Death lies in wait, to hit you with the arrow of a sudden accident.

The three stages of this life, the next one, and the in-between[321]are arranged in line, like blind birds following one another. Given the presence of those three inseparable guests, are you not afraid of your evil actions?

The three lower realms of hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals are waiting in ambush like powerful archers. Given the presence of

317 The 'mind set on awakening' that fuels the compassionate path to Buddhahood.
318 The sphere of freedom from preoccupation with concepts.
319 Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092–1158) was the initial founder of the Sakyapa school, who is said to have recieved the pith instruction on 'parting from the four attachments' from the bodhisattva Manjuśrī (otherwise called Mañjughoṣa) himself.
320 See HSM pp.634–635.
321 The intermediate state between two lives.

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those three immutable perils, are you not frightened off by the pain you have already had?

Are you not apprehensive of the pain you have now? Pain is like ripples on water – before one is over, the next one arises. Is it not time to stop them?

Happiness and sadness are like two road-companions – now they are there, and now they are not. Is it not time to part with them?

Comfort and safety are like warming in the sun. Do you not know that impermanence, like a snow-storm, arrives suddenly? Think about this, and practise the divine Dharma!

'Biography of Milarepa, Great Lord of Yogis', p.777, trans. T.A.

V.18 The pains of *saṃsāra* in general

This passage presents the Buddhist conception of saṃsāra *as 'circling around' between the higher and lower realms of rebirth. It is from 'The Words of My Precious Teacher' by Patrul Rinpoche (1808–1887), a standard handbook of the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism on the stages of the path.*[322]

As we have already explained,[323] we have got a life endowed with freedom and connection which is so difficult to find. But rather than lasting for long, it will be subjected to impermanence and death. If death was something like the dying out of a fire or the drying up of water, then that would be it and nothing else would follow. However, when we die, we do not come into nothing but must take rebirth. And as long as we take rebirth, we cannot escape the realm of saṃsāra.

In a general way, the term saṃsāra means 'circling around' like a potter's wheel, the wheel of a water mill, or a fly within a jar circling from one place to another.[324] If we put the fly into a jar and close the lid, the fly may fly all around – it will never escape from the jar. Similarly, whether we are born in a high place or a low place, we cannot escape from the realm of saṃsāra (without recourse to the Dharma). The upper part of the jar is like the higher realms of gods and humans, and the lower part like the three lower realms. Driven by our wholesome and unwholesome actions with intoxicating inclinations, we keep taking rebirth in one after another of all these six realms of beings, and it is due to this 'circling around' that we talk about 'saṃsāra'.

We have been wandering in this realm of saṃsāra since time without beginning, and there is none among all these beings who have not been each other's parents, or who have not been hostile, friendly, and indifferent to each other. A sūtra says that if someone were to count the number of his successive mothers (in his previous lives), representing each with a pellet of earth rolled to the size of a juniper pit, the whole earth would be used up before he could finish counting just how many times each sentient being had been his mother. This has been expressed by Lord Nāgārjuna as: 'We would run out of earth trying to count our mothers with balls of clay the size of juniper berries.'[325]

322 For a full English translation, see WPT.

323 In V.14.

324 At least that is what '*khor ba*, the Tibetan word for *saṃsāra* means.

325 'Letter to a Friend' v. 68. See also Th.55.

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In that way, through beginningless saṃsāra until now, there is not any kind of rebirth that we have not taken.[326] So, we have had our head and limbs cut off innumerable times for the sake of desire, and if we could hoard together all the limbs of the ants and other small insects we had been born as, they would reach higher than Sumeru, the King of Mountains. If we could gather all the tears we have wept from the suffering of cold, hunger and thirst when we had nothing to eat and nothing to wear into a lake that would never dry up, it would be larger than the great ocean surrounding the world.[327] Even the amount of molten copper we have drunk while we were born in the hells would be vaster than the four great oceans of the cardinal directions. And yet those who are still bound by desire and attachment in this realm of saṃsāra without even a moment of disillusionment will have to experience even more suffering in endless saṃsāra.

Even if, by a little fruition of some wholesome action that is karmically beneficial, we manage to obtain the long life and perfect body, wealth and glory of a deity like Brahmā or the Chief of Gods (Indra), in the end we could still not escape from the realm of death, and after death we would go through the painful humiliation of the lower realms. If that is so, then for a few years, months, or days we may be deceived by whatever little happiness we derive from the power, wealth, and freedom from sickness we have in this lifetime, but once the happy fruition of the higher realms is exhausted, we will have to experience immense poverty and misery or the almost unbearable pain of the lower realms against our will. So, of what significance is the happiness of the present, which is like a dream that you awaken from as it develops?

Even those who presently seem to be comfortable and happy, due to some small fruition of wholesomeness, are powerless to stay (like that) even for a moment once the action that propelled them into that state is exhausted. Even the rulers of gods sitting atop their precious thrones spread with divine silks, at the peak of satisfaction in the five sense-objects of desire, are going to experience pain, falling headlong down to the burning metal ground of hell in a split second once their lifespan is completed. Even the (deities of the) Sun and the Moon who light up the four continents can end up being reborn in between the continents, in darkness so deep that they cannot see as much as their own limbs stretching out or bending in.

So do not trust in the apparent joys of saṃsāra. Make up your mind that in this life you must do everything in order to liberate yourself from saṃsāra, the great ocean of suffering, and attain constant happiness, the rank of complete Buddhahood. With this thought in mind, make preparations for practising the Dharma, do the actual practice, and bring it to a conclusion.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.88–92, trans. T.A.

326 Cf. Th.73.

327 A similar idea is expressed at *Saṃyutta-nikāya* II.187–88, in terms of the blood we have lost in past lives.

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V.19 The suffering of the human realm

The following passages (V.19 to 21) from 'The Words of My Precious Teacher' are solemn contemplations on the painful nature of human existence. Focussing on the 'dark side' of life but not lacking in irony, they are meant to induce a sense of disillusionment with saṃsāra.

Human suffering include the three types of great suffering fundamental to humans; the four great streams of suffering – birth, ageing, sickness and death; the dread of meeting hated enemies; the fear of losing loved ones, the suffering of encountering what one does not want, and the suffering of not getting what one wants.[328]

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', p.120, trans. T.A.

V.20 The three fundamental types of suffering

This passage explores similar idea to that of Th.152.

The suffering of change is what we feel when some kind of happiness we experience in the present moment suddenly turns into suffering. For example, having eaten a nourishing meal, fully satisfied, we may just feel fine, but then we get stricken by a violent stomach disease due to a worm developing in our belly. Or, presently we may feel just fine, but then our livestock are driven away by enemies, our home burns down, we get attacked by a terrible disease-spirit (virus), or receive some bad news from the outside, and our happiness suddenly turns into suffering. Since, in general, none of the pleasures, comforts and renown we may seem to enjoy in this realm of saṃsāra have even a tiny bit of permanence and reliability, and are eventually nothing but suffering, grow disillusioned with them. ...

The suffering of (repeated) suffering is when, before one suffering is over, we are inflicted by another one. For example, we have leprosy, then we get an ulcer, and then, on top of the ulcer, we break out in sores. Or, upon our father's death, our mother also dies. Or, we are pursued by an enemy, and on top of that, someone dear to us passes away. Wherever we are born within this realm of saṃsāra, we merely spend our time experiencing one kind of suffering following on top of another, without even a momentary chance for happiness. ...

Most of us, who presently pride ourselves on being happy, do not actually seem to experience any suffering, but are really just creating the causes of suffering. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, our homes and riches, our ornaments and festivals are all produced through wrong-doing. Since all our actions are nothing but sinister machinations, they can only result in suffering[329] ... As the end result

328 From among the various types of suffering in the human realm, the meditations on the 'three fundamental types of suffering' and the 'four great streams of suffering' are translated here. The listed forms of suffering are those referred to as painful in the Buddha's first discourse: L.27.

329 To substantiate this shocking statement, Patrul Rinpoche adduces a few everyday examples, like tea. As he points out, cultivation of the tea plant involves killing a lot of insects, and its transportation into Tibet causes a lot of pain to the porters and pack animals. Then he mentions the trickery and deceit involved in bartering the tea, and the pain incurred by producing the animal products, like wool and lambskin, given in exchange (WPT pp.79–90). Though his arguments reflect the economic conditions of nineteenth century Tibet, it is easy to see how they apply all the more to modern food industry, marketing etc.

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of all these, we will have to go through the endless suffering of the bad destines. So everything that appears to be our well-being now is actually the suffering of suffering in the making.[330]

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.120–4, trans. T.A.

The sufferings of conception to birth, ageing, sickness, and death *V.21*

This graphic passage outlines the pains involved in the short human life-span, and urges people to practice Dharma - living ethically and developing wisdom - as the best protection against these and their repetition.

Human beings in this world are born from the womb. The grasping consciousness of the *gandharva* enters into the mixture of the seminal fluid of the father and the uterine blood of the mother,[331] and then goes through the pain of turning into a quivering mass, then a creamy mass, an oval mass, then solidifying and rounding etc.[332] When his head and limbs with all their parts are completely developed, he feels pain as if he was thrown into a prison in that tight and smelly, pitch black dark inside the mother's womb. When the mother eats hot food, he feels pain as if he was being burned by fire. When she eats something cold, he feels pain as if he was thrown into cold water. When she lies down, he feels pain as if he was crushed by a mountain. When she is full, he feels pain as if he was squeezed between rocks. When she is hungry, he feels pain as if he was falling into an abyss. And when she walks, sits down, or moves around, he feels pain as if he was being carried by the wind. When he is ready to come to birth after the number of months has been completed, and the wind of karma (the force of past action) turns his head downwards and pushes him through the birth canal, he suffers so much pain as if he was being held by his legs by a strong giant and banged against a wall. As he emerges from between the pelvic bones, he feels such pain as if being pulled through a hole in a drawplate.[333] If the birth exit is too narrow, he cannot come to birth but dies on the spot; or indeed, both mother and baby may die, and even if they do not, they feel pain as if they were going to die ...

After coming to birth, as he falls on top of the bed he feels like falling into a thorny pit. As the amniotic sac is removed from his back, he feels like being flayed alive. As the slime is rubbed off his body, he feels like

330 The point is that as long as our well-being is gained through the exploitation of other beings, we are creating the causes of suffering.

331 According to Indian medicine, the foetus is formed from the mixture of the father's semen and the mother's uterine blood. At the time of conception, this mixture is said to be entered by the consciousness from a *gandharva*, a being in the intermediate state. The Pāli *Mahā-taṇhā-saṅkhaya Sutta (Majjhima-nikāya* I.265–266) says that there is descent into the womb only when three condiions are met: sexual intercourse, at the right time of a woman's monthly cycle, and a being that is about to be reborn, a *gandhabba* (Pāli for *gandharva*), is present. The position of orthodox Theravādins, though, is that there is no time period between death and the start of a new life, so this passage presents a problem of interpretation for them.

332 These descriptions correspond to the embryonic stages of the first four weeks.

333 A drawplate is used to make the diameter of a wire smaller. It consists of a metal plate with one or more holes in it, through whch wire is drawn to make it thinner, because the diameter of the hole in the plate is smaller than the diameter of the wire.

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being beaten with a studded whip. As he is taken to his mother's lap, he feels like a baby bird carried away by a hawk. ... Whenever he suffers from the pain of hunger, thirst, or any kind of sickness, he can do nothing but cry.

[Ageing:] Then, as we grow up, we still seem to be developing for some time, but our life is actually diminishing each day, and we are getting closer and closer to death. We are busy looking after the affairs of this worldly life as they occur one after another, like ripples on water, never coming to an end. And since all they have to do with is just wrong-doing, we are in the extreme pain of creating the causes of the lower realms. ...

While we busy ourselves with those pointless and never-ending affairs of saṃsāra, we are caught unawares by the pain of ageing. As all our bodily strength gradually weakens, we can no longer digest the food we like to eat. As our eyes lose their strength, we can no longer see forms that are too small or distant. As our ear-faculty diminishes, we can no longer hear well. As our tongue-faculty weakens, we can no longer taste our food and drink, nor articulate properly what we want to say. As our mental faculty deteriorates and our memory gets clouded, we become terribly dull and forgetful. As our teeth fall out, we can no longer chew solid food and our words turn into mumbling. As our body heat is slipping away, we are no longer kept warm by the clothes we put on. As our physical strength dwindles, we cannot lift anything heavy. Though we would still like to enjoy what we want, we no longer have the power to act. As the energy system of our body is wearing out, we become irritable and impatient. Scorned by everyone, we feel depressed and miserable. As the body's elements get deprived of balance, our health problems multiply. Having to walk, sit down, or make any movement, becomes an almost insurmountable difficulty ...

[Sickness:] This human body is composed of the four elements (earth/solidity, water/cohesion, fire/heat, and wind/movement). When they are out of balance, we suffer from the pain of sickness associated with wind, bile or phlegm.[334] We may be an exuberantly healthy person in the prime of our youth, but when we are struck by the pain of sickness, we immediately feel like a little bird hit by a stone. Our strength suddenly slips away, we sink into our bed, and we find it hard even to move. Even when somebody asks us 'What is the problem?', we are not able to give them a quick reply – we can only speak with an expiring voice from deep within. Whether we lie on our right side, on our left side, on our belly, or on our back, we always feel uncomfortable. We lose our appetite, and can no longer sleep at night. During daytime, the day seems long; during night-time, the night seems long. Willy-nilly, we have to put up with the bitter, hot or sour taste of medicine, and the pain of bloodletting, cautery, and so forth. We are terrified from the thought that we might even come to die of this sickness. Under the power of demons[335] and poor integrity, we may lose control over our body and mind, and have even more deluded percep-

334 The three humours of the body in Tibetan medicine.

335 According to the Tibetan world-view, some illnesses are connected with demonic influences.

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tions than our usual saṃsāric delusions. Some people even kill themselves or jump down from a precipice. People suffer from (such terrible diseases as) leprosy and epilepsy, so even whilst living it is as if they were dead. Expelled from human society, they are left on their own.

Usually, sick people cannot look after themselves. As sickness eats them away, they become short-tempered and find more and more fault with everything done by others. If their sickness lasts too long, then people get tired of looking after them and do not listen to them any more. They are in constant pain of suffering from the pangs of sickness. ...

[Death:] Your body falls into bed and cannot get up. You can see your food and drink but have no appetite for them. Terrified by the premonition of death, you feel deeply distressed. Your confidence and self-assurance have vanished. You start having delusory visions and hallucinations. Your time has come for the great moving on. You may be surrounded by relatives and friends on all sides but they cannot keep you back. You have to go through the pain of dying all alone. You may have had countless possessions but you cannot take them with you. You cannot let go of them and yet you cannot keep them. As you recall your former wrong-doings, you start feeling remorseful. You are reminded of the pains of the bad destines, and you are terrified. As death suddenly arrives, you feel dread. As the appearances of the living fade away, you feel cold.

When a wrong-doer dies, he beats his chest on the verge of dying, and dies full of nail-marks on his chest. Remembering his former actions of wrong-doing, he is terrified of being reborn in a bad destiny. He feels regret at not having practised the Dharma while he was free to do so, which would have helped him in the moment of death. Feeling tremendous pain in his heart, he clutches at his breast, and dies full of nail-marks on his chest. As the saying goes, 'Watch a wrong-doer dying – he is a teacher demonstrating the workings of karma.' Even before they die, such people are haunted by omens of the lower realms. They have all sorts of terrifying visions, and all their sensations become painful. When their bodily elements start to disintegrate, they breathe hard, and their limbs twitch. They become confused, then their eyes roll up and they pass beyond this life. They are met by messengers from the Lord of Death, and as the visions of the intermediate state start to appear for them, they have no protector or refuge.

[The Dharma as ones refuge:] You have no assurance that the moment of leaving this life naked and empty-handed will not come as soon as today. At that time, the only thing that can certainly help you is the holy Dharma – no-one else can give you refuge. As said, 'Think of the Dharma as soon as you are in your mother's womb. As soon as you are born, be mindful of death!' Since death can hit suddenly both the old and the young, we have to practise the Dharma that can help us in the moment of our death since the day we are born. Yet we have not thought of death up to now, but have been busy fighting our enemies and protecting our family, taking care of our home and possessions. As all this time has been spent in attachment, hatred and bewilderment for the sake of friends and relatives, we have committed a great error.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.124–132, trans. T.A.

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V.22 The pains of being parted from who and what we love and like

This passage from Nyingma master Longchen Rabjampa (1308–1364), is quoted by Patrul Rinpoche in the section on 'the pain of encountering what one does not want'.

We would like to stay together with our spouse and family forever, but we are certain to part from them. We would like to stay in our nice home forever, but we are certain to leave it behind. We would like to enjoy a happy life of abundance forever, but we are certain to lose it. We would like to keep this precious human life of freedom and connection forever, but we are certain to die. We would like to keep studying the Dharma with our wonderful teacher forever, but we are certain to let him go. We would like to stay together with our nice spiritual friends forever, but are certain to separate. 'From this very day, put on the armour of perseverance, and get ready to cross over to the Land of Great Bliss (of Awakening) without separation.' This is what I the 'Beggar without Dharma'[336] advise to all my companions who are deeply disillusioned with saṃsāra.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', p.139, trans. T.A.

V.23 An admonition by Milarepa: do not waste any opportunity to practise the Dharma!

In a similar vein, Milarepa admonishes his students not to waste the opportunity presented by 'the precious human life'.[337]

Even though I may teach the Dharma, only a few people put it into practice.

Though I may teach the Dharma to engender disillusionment with saṃsāra, the ocean of suffering, very few people are revolted with it.

Though I may tell them that there is no time to wait, for the rest of their lives is fully petering out, very few people are mindful of death.

Even though it is a rare opportunity to keep steadfast ethical discipline when you have a precious human life with freedom and connection (to the Dharma), very few people can keep even the one-day precepts.

Though I may tell them about the good qualities of the higher realms (of humans and gods) and liberation, as well as the shortcomings of saṃsāra, very few people do actually enter the gateway to the Dharma.

Though I may teach the most profound oral instructions of the whispered lineage[338] without reservation, only a few people do put them into practice.

Though I may give them guidance and introduction to the holy Dharma of Mahāmudrā,[339] very few people do recognize the nature of the mind.

336 That is how Longchen Rabjampa calls himself out of modesty and self-irony.

337 See HSM pp.532–533.

338 That is, the most secret teachings, which are transmitted only orally and individually to each students, as if 'whispered' so that no-one else can hear it.

339 Mahāmudrā is the highest Vajrayāna teaching of the Kagyudpa order, originating from the Indian *mahāsiddha* Tilopa (988–1069), and containing instructions for recognizing the nature of the mind similar to those of the Dzogchen tradition (see V.70).

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Though I may always try to inspire them to go on a mountain retreat, the guru's heart-wish, very few people are actually willing to do the practice.

Though I may freely instruct them on the profound path of means taught by Nāropa, very few people do exhibit the sign of heat.[340]

If you want to do something meaningful while in this precious human body of freedom and connection, then follow me!

'One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa', pp.260–61, trans. T.A.

340 The reference is to the practice of 'inner heat' known as *tumo* (Skt *caṇḍalī*), first in a system of yoga practices known as the 'six dharmas of Nāropa'.

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CHAPTER 6

THE BUDDHIST PATH AND ITS PRACTICE

THERAVĀDA

Individual responsibility and personal effort

Th.79 **Buddhas show the way; one must tread it oneself**

By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself is one made pure. Purity and impurity depend on oneself; no one can purify another. ...

You yourself must make the effort; the Tathāgatas are only teachers. The meditators who tread the way are released from the shackles of death.

Dhammapada 165 and 276, trans. P.D.P.

Th.80 **The power of heedful awareness**

Heedfulness is the path to the deathless; heedlessness is the path to death.

The heedful do not die; the heedless are as if already dead. ...

By effort and heedfulness, restraint and self-control, let the wise one make an island (of himself) which no flood can overwhelm.

Dhammapada 21 and 25, trans. P.H.

Th.81 **Gradually straighten yourself out**

Irrigators guide the water; fletchers straighten the arrow shaft; carpenters shape the wood; the wise control themselves.

Though one may conquer a thousand times a thousand men in battle, it is best to be victor over just *one*: oneself.

Gradually, little by little, moment by moment, a wise person should remove their own impurities, as a smith removes his dross from silver.

Dhammapada 80, 103 and 239, trans. P.H.

Th.82 **Do not fritter life away, wasting opportunities for spiritual development**

Better than living a hundred years with bad conduct and lacking in meditative composure,

Is living for one day ethically disciplined and meditative. ...

The person of little learning grows old like a plough-ox:

muscles grow, but not wisdom. ...

Those who in youth have neither led the holy life nor acquired wealth: they pine away like old herons in a pond without fish.

Dhammapada 110, 152 and 155, trans. P.H.

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Effort rightly directs the mind, and leads to the end of painful states *Th.83*

This passage emphasizes that effort is needed for the spiritual path, though note that L.32 counsels that such effort should be neither too taut nor too slack.

Monks, under three circumstances effort should be put forth. What three? For the non-arising of unarisen unwholesome states of mind, for the arising of unarisen wholesome states of mind and for the enduring of sharp, rough, disagreeable, life-sapping bodily feelings. Monks, under these three circumstances effort should be put forth.

Monks, when the monk exerts himself ... [in these ways], it is said that he puts forth effort mindfully and skilfully for the rightful ending of the painful.

Ātappa-karaṇīya Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.153, trans. P.D.P.

A basis for initiative and agency *Th.84*

This passage shows that although the teaching of the Buddha does not accept the idea of a permanent, essential self, the notions of individual initiative and effort, and a psychological basis for these, are duly recognized.

Then a certain brahmin approached the Blessed One, exchanged friendly greetings, sat on one side and said: 'Good Gotama, I am of this view and say: "There is no self-agency, there is no agency by others."' 'Brahmin, I have not seen or heard of such a view: How could someone himself approaching and returning say "There is no self- agency, there is no agency by others"? 'Brahmin, is there an element of initiative?' 'Yes, good one.' 'Brahmin, when there is an element of initiative, there is a living being taking the initiative: this is self-agency and this is agency by others. Brahmin, when there is an element of going forth ... when there is an element of power ... when there is an element of strength ... firmness ... when there is an element of effort, there is a being that puts forth effort. This is self-agency and this is agency by others.

Attakārī Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya III.337–338, trans. P.D.P.

The need for virtuous and wise companions as spiritual friends

Cultivate good, spiritual friends *Th.85*

It is easy to see the faults of others, but hard to see one's own faults. Like chaff, one winnows another's faults, but hides one's own, like a crafty gambler hiding a bad throw. ...

If you see a wise person who, seeing your faults, says what is blameworthy, you should associate with him as with a revealer of treasures. Associating with such a one will always be for the better, not worse. ...

Do not associate with evil friends; do not associate with bad people. Associate with friends who are good; associate with the best of people.

Dhammapada 252, 76 and 78, trans. P.H.

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Th.86 Virtuous and wise spiritual friends as guides and companions on the path

These passages emphasize that the monastic life, and by implication the broader spiritual path, depends wholly on having supportive companions and friendly advisers or teachers: kalyāṇa-mittas, *'good friends' in the sense of virtuous and wise spiritual friends, with the Buddha as the greatest of these.*

Great king, once I was living in the hamlet named Nāgaraka of the Sakyans. Then the monk Ānanda approached me, paid respect, sat on one side and said: 'Venerable sir, half of this holy life is friendship, association and companionship with the good. Great king, when this was said, I said to monk Ānanda, 'Ānanda, do not say so! This holy life is not half but completely friendship, association and companionship with the good. Ānanda, it is of a monk having a virtuous and wise friend, associate, and companion that one can expect that he will develop the noble eightfold path and intensely cultivate it. ...

Ānanda, by coming to me as their spiritual friend, Ānanda, beings having birth as their nature, are released from birth, beings having decay as their nature, are released from decay, beings having death as their nature, are released from death, beings having grief, lamentation, pain, unhappiness and distress as their nature are released from these.'

Kalyāṇa-mitta Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.87–88 <197–199>, trans. P.D.P.

Therein, what is spiritual friendship? Association with, following after and being with such persons as have faith and ethical discipline, and are learned, generous and wise; to resort to and consort with them, to be devoted to them, enthusiastic about them, and to be close to them.

Dhammasaṅgaṇi, section 1328, trans. P.H.

Monks, one should associate with a monk friend who has seven qualities; one should resort to him and attend on him even if he dismisses you. What seven? He is pleasing and agreeable; respected; esteemed; a skilful adviser; a patient listener; gives deep talks; and does not enjoin one to do what is inappropriate.

Aṅguttara-nikāya IV.32. trans. P.H.

Th.87 The pervading influence of the good person

The perfume of flowers blows not against the wind, nor does the fragrance of sandal-wood, tagara and jasmine; but the fragrance of the good person blows against the wind; the good person pervades every direction.

Dhammapada 54, trans. P.H.

Th.88 The benefits of finding a good and wise teacher

This passage concerns someone who has assessed the qualities of a teacher, and found him or her to be without leanings to greed, hatred or delusion.

When he finds that he is cleansed of proneness to greed, hatred and delusion, he reposes faith in him. With faith born, he draws near; drawing near, he sits close to him; sitting close, he lends ear; with attentive ear, he listens to the teaching; having listened, he remembers the

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teaching; he examines closely the meaning of the remembered teachings. When he closely examines the meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of the teachings; when he gains a reflective acceptance of the teachings, desire is born; when desire is born, he makes an effort; having made an effort, he weighs it up; having weighed it up, he strives; when striving, he realizes the highest truth in his own person, and sees it, having penetrated it with wisdom.

Caṅkī Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya II.174, trans. P.D.P and P.H.

The role and nature of faith

Faith as the first of the five spiritual faculties *Th.89*

Faith, in the sense of a trustful confidence – a quality more of the heart than a cognitive belief – has an important role in Buddhism, albeit generally not as central as in some religions.

Monks, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculty of faith, the faculty of vigour, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of meditative concentration, the faculty of understanding (or wisdom). And what, monks, is the faculty of faith? Here, monks, a disciple of the noble one is a person of faith, one who places faith in the awakening of the Tathāgata [as in Th.1].

Vibhaṅga Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.196–197, trans. P.H.

The nature of faith *Th.90*

This passage emphasizes that faith both leads to calm and encourages one to seek to attain the stages of spiritual perfection.

'Venerable sir, what is the distinguishing mark of faith?' 'Faith, great king, has making serene and leaping forwards as distinguishing marks. ... When faith is arising, it suspends the hindrances (to meditative calm) ... like a water-clearing gem. ... Great king, the earnest practitioner, on seeing that the minds of others are freed, leaps forward towards (attaining) the fruits that are stream-entry, once-returning, and non-returning, and towards arahantship ... just as when a crowd of people, seeing that a strong man had crossed over (a river in flood), would cross over too.'

Milindapañha 34–6, trans. P.H.

The roles of faith and understanding *Th.91*

The first spiritual breakthrough may be made by a person emphasizing either understanding of the Dhamma or faith in the Buddha. That said, though some serious disciples are relatively stronger in understanding or faith, all need sufficient strength in all five faculties. The second passage here explains that faith needs to be guided by understanding, and the cognitive quality of understanding needs grounding by the heart quality and commitment of faith.

What kind of person is a Dhamma-follower? Here a certain person ... accepts the teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata with a measure of appreciative understanding through his wisdom. Furthermore he has these qualities: the faculties of faith, vigour, mindfulness, meditative concentration and wisdom ... What kind of person is a faith-follower? Here a certain person ... has a (sufficient) measure of faith in

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and love for the Tathāgata. Furthermore he has these qualities: the faculties of faith, vigour, mindfulness, meditative concentration and wisdom ...

Kīṭāgiri Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.479, trans. P.H.

What is particularly recommended is balancing faith with understanding, and meditative concentration with vigour. For one strong in faith and weak in understanding is confused in his confidence, and has no good grounds for it. One strong in understanding and weak in faith errs on the side of deceitful cleverness and is as hard to cure as one sick of a disease caused by medicine. With the balancing of the two, a person has confidence only when there are grounds for it.

Visuddhimagga[341] ch. IV, section 47, p.139, trans. P.H.

Th.92 Faith becomes strong in those attained to a noble state

Here, monks, a disciple who is a noble one is endowed with confirmed confidence in the Buddha thus: ... [as in Th.1].

He is endowed with confirmed confidence in the Dhamma thus: 'The Dhamma is directly visible (as to is truth and reality), not delayed (in its results), inviting investigation, applicable and onward leading, to be individually understood by the wise'

He is endowed with confirmed confidence in the Sangha thus: ... [as in Th.199].

Rājā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.343, trans. P.H. and P.D.P.

Going for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha

Th.93 Going for refuge

The following passage is the formula for 'going for refuge', an idea found in L.40, 57, 58 and Th.110. Chanted in Pāli, after an affirmation of praise to the Buddha, it takes each of the Buddha, the Dhamma (teachings, path, and what this leads to) and Sangha - the spiritual Community with the monastic community as its heart - as a 'refuge'. The notion of a 'refuge', here, is not that of a place to hide, but of something the thought of which purifies, uplifts and strengthens the heart. Orientation towards these three guides to a better way of living is experienced as a joyful haven of calm, a firm 'island amidst a flood', in contrast to the troubles of life. The 'refuges' remind the Buddhist of calm, wise, spiritual people and states of mind, and so help engender these states. The value of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha is denoted by the fact that they are also known as the 'Three Jewels': spiritual treasures of supreme worth. The threefold repetition of the refuge formula marks off the recitation from ordinary uses of speech, and ensures that the mind dwells on the meaning of each affirmation at least once. Lay Buddhists usually chant the refuge formula then five ethical precepts (Th.110) as an expression of faith in and commitment to the teaching of the Buddha.

341 This is an influential non-canonical text by the fifth century CE. Theravāda commentator Buddhaghosa.

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Reverence to the Blessed One, arahant, perfectly awakened Buddha.

I go to the Buddha as refuge.
I go to the Dhamma as refuge.
I go to the Sangha as refuge.

For a second time, I go to the Buddha as refuge.
For a second time, I go to the Dhamma as refuge.
For a second time, I go to the Sangha as refuge.

For a third time, I go to the Buddha as refuge.
For a third time, I go to the Dhamma as refuge.
For a third time, I go to the Sangha as refuge.

Saraṇā-gamanaṃ: Khuddaka-pāṭha 1, trans. P.H.

Devotional activities

Monuments for Buddha-relics (*stūpas*) ***Th.94***

In this passage the Buddha explains that after his cremation, the remaining relics of his body are to be interred in a stūpa, *or relic mound, to be a focus of devotion for people. See V.26 for a Tibetan story on faith in relics.*

A stūpa for the Tathāgata is to be built at a great four-way intersection. And those who offer a garland, a scent, or a perfume powder there, or bow down there, or brighten their minds there: that will be for their long-term welfare and happiness. ...

And for what reason is a Tathāgata, arahant and perfectly awakened Buddha worthy of a stūpa? (At the thought,) 'This is the *stūpa* of a Tathāgata, arahant and perfectly awakened Buddha', many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then – on the dissolution of the body, after death – they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.141–142, trans. P.H.

Chants on the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha that bring protection and blessings

After the Buddha's death, his beneficial power was sought not only by respect shown to his relics (and by practising the Dhamma), but also by chanting certain texts that came to be known as paritta*s, 'protections'. These are seen to bring blessings and protection when devoutly chanted or listened to, especially when monks or nuns are chanting them. Their power is seen to lie in: their having the Buddha as source; their expressing the Dhamma; their being chanted by the Sangha; their bringing inspiring strength and alertness to the hearer; their drawing on the power of an asseveration, or solemn utterance, of a morally or spiritually significant truth; their drawing the attention and protection of gods who are followers of the Buddha; and their enabling past beneficial karma to bring its fruits now. It is said, though, that they can only benefit those with faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and who are not obstructed by certain past karma and present defilements* (Milinda-pañha *150–154).*

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Th.95 The Jewel Discourse (*Ratana Sutta*)

This is a much-loved paritta text, which illustrates the idea of the beneficial power of reflectively uttering truths about the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Whatever spirits have gathered here, whether ones of the earth or sky, may they all be happy and listen intently to what I say.

Thus, spirits, you should all be attentive. Show loving kindness to the human race: as they bring their offerings day and night, diligently offer them protection.

Whatever wealth there is, here or elsewhere, whatever is the most exquisite jewel in the heavens, none is there equal to a Tathāgata. This exquisite jewel is in the Buddha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

Destruction (of craving), dispassion, the exquisite deathless, attained by the Sakyan Sage in meditative concentration: there is nothing to equal that Dhamma. This exquisite jewel is in the Dhamma; by this truth, may there be well-being.

What the excellent Buddha extolled as pure, and called the meditative concentration of immediate result; to that state, no equal can be found. This exquisite jewel is in the Dhamma; by this truth, may there be well-being.

The eight individuals who are praised by the good form these four pairs.[342] They, disciples of the Fortunate One, are worthy of offerings; what is given to them bears great fruit. This exquisite jewel is in the Sangha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

Those who, without sensual desire, firm-minded, apply themselves to Gotama's message, on attaining their goal, plunge into the deathless, enjoying quenching (of the fires of craving), having obtained it for nothing. This exquisite jewel is in the Sangha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

As a gate-post planted in the earth would be unshakeable by the four winds: of such a kind, I tell you, is the person of integrity, who – having comprehended the Truths of the Noble Ones – sees. This exquisite jewel is in the Sangha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

Those who have understood clearly the Truths of the Noble Ones, well-taught by the one of deep wisdom: even if they become very heedless, they will have no more than seven further rebirths. This exquisite jewel is in the Sangha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

At the moment of attaining insight, one abandons three things: view on personality, vacillation, and clinging to rules and vows.[343] One is completely released from the four kinds of unfortunate rebirths, and is incapable of committing the six great wrongs.[344] This exquisite jewel is in the Sangha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

Whatever bad deed one may do – by body, speech, or mind – one cannot hide it: an incapability ascribed to one who has seen the (deathless) state. This exquisite jewel is in the Sangha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

342 The kinds of noble persons, or those with initial or higher levels of liberating insight: seeTh.199 and 201

343 See Th.200.

344 Murdering one's mother, one's father, or an *arahant*, wounding a Buddha, causing a schism in the Sangha, or professing the doctrines of another teacher.

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Like a forest grove with flowering tops in the first month of the heat of the summer, so is the excellent Dhamma he taught, for the highest benefit, leading to nirvana. This exquisite jewel is in the Buddha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

The excellent one, knowing what is excellent, giving what is excellent, bringing what is excellent, beyond compare, taught the excellent Dhamma. This exquisite jewel is in the Buddha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

'The old is destroyed, the new is not arising'. Those whose minds are without passion for future rebirths, the seeds of which have been destroyed, have no desire for growing (any such states). The wise are quenched like this lamp. This exquisite jewel is in the Sangha; by this truth, may there be well-being.

Whatever spirits have gathered here, whether ones of the earth or sky, let us revere the Tathāgata honoured by gods and humans, the Buddha: may there be well-being.

Whatever spirits have gathered here, whether ones of the earth or sky, let us revere the Tathāgata honoured by gods and humans, and the Dhamma: may there be well-being.

Whatever spirits have gathered here, whether ones of the earth or sky, let us revere the Tathāgata honoured by gods and humans, and the Sangha: may there be well-being.

Ratana Sutta: Khuddakapāṭha sutta 8, and *Sutta-nipāta* 222–238, trans. P.H.

The Auspicious Activity Discourse (*Maṅgala Sutta*) *Th.96*

This concerns what is the supreme maṅgala*: auspicious activity which brings blessing or good fortune. Prior to Buddhism, various ceremonies were seen as* maṅgalas*. The Buddha sees Dhamma-practice as the best* maṅgala*. This Sutta encapsulates many Buddhist values, and is also seen to be a* paritta *chant - one that itself brings protection and blessings when chanted.*

Thus have I heard. At one time, the Blessed One was staying at Sāvatthī, in the Jeta grove in the monastic park (donated by) Anāthapiṇḍika. Then, as night was passing away, a certain deity, being of surpassing radiance, illuminating the whole Jeta grove, approached the Blessed One. Having approached and respectfully greeted him, he stood on one side. So standing, the deity addressed the Blessed One with a verse:

Many gods and humans have thought about auspicious actions hoping for well-being. Tell me what is supreme auspicious activity.

(The Buddha replied:)

Not associating with fools, but associating with the wise, and honouring those worthy of honour. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Living in suitable places, and having done what is karmically beneficial in the past, also proper self-application. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Being endowed with learning and practical skills, well-trained in self-discipline, with well-spoken speech. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Aid for mother and father, caring for wife and children, and an occupation without conflict. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

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Being generous, acting in accord with Dhamma, caring for one's relatives, and blameless actions. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Distaste for and avoidance of evil, refraining from intoxicating drink, being heedful in all things. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Having respect, humility, contentment and gratitude, and timely hearing of Dhamma. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Patient acceptance, willingness to receive correction, seeing renunciants, timely discussion of Dhamma. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Ardent practice and the (celibate) holy life, seeing the Truths of the Noble Ones, and realization of nirvana. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Touched by the ups and downs of the world, one's mind being sorrowless, stainless, secure. This is a supreme auspicious activity.

Having done such things, everywhere unconquered, they go everywhere in safety. This is their supreme auspicious activity.'

Maṅgala Sutta: Khuddaka-pāṭha, Sutta 5, and *Sutta-nipāta* 258–269, trans. P.H.

Ethical discipline, meditation, wisdom

The spiritual defilements such as greed, hatred and delusion exist at three levels: as expressed in overt actions of body or speech; in active lines of thought or conscious states of mind; and as currently unexpressed underlying tendencies and intoxicating inclinations, in the depths of the mind. The Buddhist path needs to address all three levels. Ethical discipline (sīla) *restrains unwholesome bodily and verbal actions. Meditative concentration* (samādhi) *trains the mind so as to undermine unwholesome states and cultivate wholesome ones, and wisdom* (paññā)*, aided by meditative calm, can come to dig out the roots of the underlying tendencies and intoxicating inclinations.*

Th.97 Ethical discipline as the basis for the rest of path

So you see, Ānanda, wholesome ethical discipline has freedom from regret as purpose and benefit; freedom from regret has gladness; gladness has joy; joy has tranquillity; tranquillity has happiness; happiness has meditative concentration; meditative concentration has seeing things as they really are; seeing things as they really are has turning away and non-attachment; turning away and non-attachment have release by knowing and seeing as their purpose and benefit. So you see, Ānanda, wholesome ethical discipline leads gradually up to the summit.

Ānisaṃsa Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya V.2, trans. P.H.

Th.98 The unfolding of the gradual path in the three trainings

This passage focuses on the gradual stages of spiritual training as regards ethical discipline and meditation, as a basis for wisdom. A brahmin says that there is gradual progress up a staircase, and in the training of brahmins, archers and accountants, then asks the Buddha:

'Venerable sir, is it possible to find in the same way a gradual train-

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ing, a gradual course of action and a gradual path in this Dhamma and discipline too?'

'Brahmin, it is possible to find in this Dhamma and discipline, too, a gradual training, a gradual course of action and a gradual way of practice. A clever trainer of horses, having obtained a young thoroughbred for training, would first train it in the bit of the bridle and would then give the further subsequent training. In the same manner, the Tathāgata would obtain a person amenable to restraint, and discipline him first in the following manner: "Come, monk, be of good practices, and live observing the restraints of the code of monastic rules, being well-mannered and courteous, seeing fear in the slightest fault; observe the rules of conduct and train yourself in them."

When the monk fulfils this, the Tathāgata trains him further, thus: "Come, monk, be guarded in your sense doors. Having seen a form with the eye, do not grasp at its main or minor characteristics. Since, when one lives with the faculty of vision unrestrained, longing and displeasure, evil and unwholesome states flow in, practise the restraint of it. Having heard a sound with the ear ... smelt a scent with the nose, tasted a flavour with the tongue, touched a tangible object with the body, and discerned an idea with the mind ... practise the restraint of these sense-faculties."

When the monk fulfils this, the Tathāgata trains him further, thus: "Come, monk, be moderate in eating. Having considered with proper reflection, partake of food: not for play, not for intoxication, not to look beautiful, not for adornment, but for the mere upkeep of the body and for sustenance, to avoid infliction of injury (on the body), as an aid to the living of the holy life, thinking, 'I allay the earlier painful feeling (of hunger) and do not give rise to a new painful feeling (from overeating), and let it be a vehicle for me for faultlessness and comfortable living'."

Brahmin, when the monk fulfils this, the Tathāgata trains him further, thus: "Come, monk, abide wakefully. During the day in the walking and the sitting posture, cleanse the mind of obstructive states. In the first watch of the night ... cleanse the mind of obstructive states. In the middle watch of the night turn to the right, and sleep keeping the lion's posture, placing one foot over the other, calling to mind with mindfulness and clear comprehension the sign for waking up. In the last watch of the night, in the walking and the sitting posture, cleanse the mind of obstructive states."

Brahmin, when the monk fulfils this, the Tathāgata trains him further, thus, "Come monk, be endowed with mindfulness and clear comprehension. Act with clear comprehension when approaching and receding, looking on and looking about, bending and stretching, bearing the robes and bowl, eating, drinking, biting and tasting, urinating and excreting, when going, standing, sitting, sleeping and being awake. Act with clear comprehension when talking and keeping silent."

When the monk fulfils this, the Tathāgata trains him further, thus: "Come monk resort to a secluded dwelling, a forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a grotto, a rock cave, a charnel ground, a jungle resort, an open space or a heap of leaves." Having done so, when he has returned from the alms-round, after the meal he sits cross-legged, with the body

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erect and mindfulness established in front of him.' [The passage goes on to describe overcoming the five hindrances to meditative calming and attaining in turn the four meditative absorptions, much as in passages Th.127 and 140, then says that some disciples go on to attain the final goal, while some do not, just as some people can successfully follow directions to a destination, and some not.]

Gaṇaka-moggallāna Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.1–3, trans. P.D.P.

The noble eightfold path: the middle way of practice

The classical path of ancient, and Theravāda Buddhism is the eightfold path that leads to the end of what is painful. As seen in the opening of passage L.27, it is a middle way that avoids both the pursuit of sensual pleasures and also the harsh self-torture that can be found among ascetics. It is a moderate way of restraining attachment to sensual pleasures, whether as a monastic or a layperson.

Th.99 The factors of the noble eightfold path

This passage explains the path factors. These are not so much 'steps on a path' as factors that all need to be assembled and then developed to a sufficient degree for the path to do its work.

And what, monks, is right view? Understanding of the painful (*dukkha*), understanding of the origination of the painful, understanding of the cessation of the painful, understanding of the way going to the cessation of the painful: this, monks, is called right view.

And what is right resolve? Resolve for renunciation, for freedom from ill-will, for harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from harsh speech, and from idle chatter: this is called right speech.

And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given (stealing), from misconduct with respect to sensual pleasures (sexual misconduct): this is called right action.

And what is right livelihood? Here a disciple of the noble one, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: this is called right livelihood.

And what is right effort? Here a monk generates desire, endeavours, arouses vigour, upholds and exerts his mind for the non-arising of evil, unwholesome states that have not yet arisen ... for the abandoning of evil, unwholesome states that have arisen ... for the arising of wholesome states that have not yet arisen ... (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, and culmination of wholesome states that have arisen: this is called right effort.

And what is right mindfulness?[345] Here a monk abides, in respect of the body, reflectively observing the body, possessed of effort, clearly comprehending, and mindful, removing intense desire for and unhappiness with the world. He abides, in respect of feelings, reflectively

345 See Th.138 for a full description of this.

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observing feelings, possessed of effort ... in respect of the mind, reflectively observing mind, possessed of effort ... in respect of reality-patterns, reflectively observing reality-patterns, possessed of effort ... this is called right mindfulness.

And what is right meditative concentration? Here a monk – quite withdrawn from sensual desires, withdrawn from unwholesome states (of mind) – enters and remains in the first meditative absorption ... [There follows a description of the four meditative absorptions, on which see Th.140].

This is called the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful.

Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.311–313, trans. P.H.

Two levels of the path *Th.100*

This passage makes clear that the path has a preliminary, preparatory form, in which right view is belief in karma and rebirth, and a fully noble form, in which right view is wisdom, implicitly the right view of the four Truths, as in the previous passage.

Right view, I say, is twofold: there is right view that has intoxicating inclinations, partaking of karmic benefit, ripening on the side of attachment; and there is right view that is noble, without intoxicating inclinations, world-transcendent, a factor of the path.

And what, monks, is right view that has intoxicating inclinations ...? (It is the belief:) 'There is gift, there is offering, there is (self-)sacrifice ... [there follows the precise opposite of the wrong view described in passage Th.56, that denies the value of giving and good action, that these have karmic effects leading to good rebirths, which can be known about by wise meditators.] ...

And what is right view that is noble ...? Wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the investigation-of-qualities factor of awakening, the right view path-factor of one who, developing the noble path, is of noble mind, of a mind without intoxicating inclinations, endowed with the noble path.

Mahā-cattārīsaka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.72, trans. P.H.

The path factors and the three trainings *Th.101*

This passage assigns the path factors as part of the three trainings. These trainings are practised at the ordinary level broadly in the order: ethical discipline, meditative concentration, wisdom. When this practise breaks through to the noble level of the path at a time of deep insight, it is noble wisdom that comes first, triggering noble ethical discipline and noble meditative concentration. Having experienced the noble path, a person becomes a noble disciple (see Th.201), and among these, stream-enterers have perfected ethical discipline, non-returners have perfected meditative concentration, and arahants *have perfected wisdom (*Aṅguttara-nikāya *I.231–232).*

Right speech, right action and right livelihood: these are states included in the ethical discipline group. Right effort, right mindfulness and right meditative concentration: these are states included in the meditative concentration group. Right view and right resolve: these are states included in the wisdom group.

Cūla-vedalla Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.301, trans. P.H.

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MAHĀYĀNA
Faith

M.46 **The power of faith and worship**

With deep faith in the Buddhas and their Dharma, with faith too in the path trodden by the Buddha's sons, and in unsurpassed perfect awakening, bodhisattvas set their minds on awakening.

Faith is the first step on the path, the mother of all virtues. It nourishes all wholesome roots, and helps them to grow. It tears down the net of doubt, and rescues living beings from the river of craving. It reveals the unsurpassed path to nirvana.

Faith purifies the mind, so that it is clear and spotless; it eliminates arrogance, and encourages respect. It is the foremost treasure of the wealth of the Dharma, the pure hand which receives all good conduct.[346]

Faith leads one to give without holding anything back. Faith leads one to experience great joy in the Buddha's teachings. Faith leads to the growth of wisdom and the attainment of virtue. Faith leads one to the realm of the Tathāgata.

Faith makes the senses pure and bright. Faith brings firm, unassailable strength. Faith uproots the defilements. Faith leads directly to the virtues of a Buddha.

With faith, one is not restricted by any objects of perception, separated from all hardships, free from hardships. Faith leads one beyond the paths of Māra. Faith shows the way to unsurpassed liberation.

Faith is the fresh seed of virtue. Faith grows into the tree of awakening. Faith develops into supreme knowledge. Faith reveals all the Buddhas.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, p.72b16–29, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Just as a spark of fire the size of a mustard seed can burn down a pile of hay the size of Mount Meru,

A little virtue attained by worshipping the Buddhas removes the defilements, and leads one to nirvana.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, p.278a12–13, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The Venerable Subhūti asked the Buddha, 'How do bodhisattvas, great beings, worship and serve all the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, in order to fully develop their wholesome roots, to benefit from true spiritual friends, and to quickly attain omniscience?'

The Buddha said to Venerable Subhūti, 'A bodhisattva, a great being, from the time when he first sets his mind on awakening, worships and serves the Buddha, the Blessed One. He hears the Buddha's teachings in person, everything from sūtras to explanatory texts. He bears what he has heard in mind, re-reads it repeatedly, and reviews it again and again, so that he becomes familiar with it. When he is fa-

346 Faith can receive the fruits of good conduct in the same way as a hand can receive treasure.

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miliar with it, he reflects upon its meaning. When he has discerned the profound meaning contained within these texts, he masters the dhāraṇīs.[347] The unimpeded liberation which assures the attainment of unsurpassed perfect awakening then arises. After that, wherever he is reborn, he will never forget what he has heard, and he will never lose the teachings of the true Dharma. His wholesome roots are planted with all the many Buddhas. Because of the power of these wholesome roots, he will never be reborn in states of misfortune. Again, because of these wholesome roots, his mind will become happy and pure. Because of the power of this pure and happy mind, his progress towards awakening will be irreversible, and he will yearn for the glorious pure realms of the Buddhas. Again, because of these wholesome roots, he will never be separated from true spiritual friends, from all of the Tathāgatas, all of the bodhisattvas, solitary-buddhas, disciples, and all others who praise the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.'

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol.7, text 220, pp.700c9–23, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The great benefits of being in contact with a Buddha *M.47*

This passage praises the rarity and great privilege of coming into contact with a Buddha and his teachings.

As it says in the Noble Gaṇḍavyūha (Sūtra): ...

The Tathāgatas arise for the sake of all beings – greatly compassionate heroes who turn the wheel of the Dharma.

How can all beings repay the Buddhas, who have been intent on the welfare of living beings for countless hundreds of eons?

It is better to roast in the three terrible states of misfortune for countless eons than not to see the teacher who founds all Sanghas. ...

When one sees the Buddha, the best of men, all transgressions are destroyed.

One who reaches awakening increases his beneficial karma infinitely. ...

This is how one's beneficial karma increases when one meets the Buddha. The fruits of just seeing an image of the Tathāgata are immeasurable, so how great will the fruits of seeing his body itself be?

Śikṣā-samuccaya of Śāntideva, ch.17, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Faith building on past faith *M.48*

The Venerable Subhūti asked the Blessed One, 'Blessed One, in times to come, in the future, in future times, at a point in the future, in the five-hundred year period when the true Dharma is destroyed,[348] will there be any living beings who will perceive the truth of the words of this sūtra when they hear them?'

'Subhūti, in times to come, in the future ... great beings with many

347 Powerful formulas or incantations, similar to mantras.

348 It was traditionally believed that the Dharma would go through five stages of decline, each lasting five hundred years. The period Subhūti is referring to here is the final one.

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good qualities, moral and wise, who will perceive the truth of the words of this sūtra when they hear them. Those bodhisattvas, Subhūti, those great beings will not have worshipped only one Buddha. They will not have planted wholesome roots with only one Buddha. Those bodhisattvas, Subhūti, those great beings will have worshipped many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, and planted wholesome roots with many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas. They will attain one-pointed clarity of mind when they hear the words of this sūtra.

The Tathāgata knows these bodhisattvas, Subhūti, with his Buddha-knowledge. The Tathāgata sees these bodhisattvas, Subhūti, with his Buddha-eye. The Tathāgata, Subhūti, is awake to these bodhisattvas.

Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, section 6, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha

M.49 How one should express devotion to the Three Refuges

This passages holds that a lay bodhisattva *should take the refuges by practising so as to develop the qualities leading to Buddhahood, respecting and drawing on everything to do with the Dharma, and respecting non-Mahāyāna Buddhists, especially monastics, while not wanting to work at their level of practice.*

How should a householder bodhisattva go for refuge to the Buddha? He should think, 'I wish to acquire a Buddha-body, adorned with the thirty-two bodily characteristics of a Buddha.[349] I will acquire the wholesome roots necessary to develop the thirty-two characteristics of a great man. In order to develop these marks, I will apply myself with vigour.' This, householder, is how a householder bodhisattva should go for refuge to the Buddha.

How should a householder bodhisattva go for refuge to the Dharma? Householder, a bodhisattva honours the Dharma and those who teach the Dharma. He supports the Dharma. He yearns for the Dharma. He delights in the supreme pleasures of the Dharma. He helps the Dharma. He dwells in the Dharma. He bears the Dharma in mind. He protects the Dharma. He stands firm in the Dharma. He praises the Dharma. He dwells practising the Dharma. He causes the Dharma to grow. He requests the Dharma. He takes the Dharma as his strength. He arms himself with the weapons of the Dharma. He devotes himself completely to the Dharma. He thinks, 'When I have attained unsurpassed perfect awakening, I will spread the true Dharma equally to all humans, gods, and demi-gods.' This, householder, is how a householder bodhisattva should go for refuge to the Dharma.

Householder, how should the householder bodhisattva go for refuge to the Sangha? Householder, when the bodhisattva sees a stream-enterer, a once-returner, a non-returner, an arhant, or an ordinary per-

349 See L.38.

350 Which has the attainment of arhantship as its goal, in contrast to the Mahāyāna, 'the great vehicle', which is the way of the *bodhisattva* towards Buddhahood.

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son who practices the vehicle of the disciples,[350] he honours them all. He immediately stands up to welcome them, salutes them with kind words and a sweet voice, paying his respects to them by walking around them, always keeping them to his right. He should think, 'When I have attained unsurpassed perfect awakening, I will teach the Dharma so that others may develop good qualities. Although I honour them, my heart does not dwell among them.' This, householder, is how a householder bodhisattva should go for refuge to the Sangha.

Ugra-paripṛcchā, section 19 of the *Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Taishō* vol.11, text 310, pp.472c22–473a09, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Why there are Three Refuges *M.50*

Son of good family, it is in order to eliminate suffering, to eradicate the defilements, and to attain the unsurpassed bliss of nirvana that one goes for refuge to ... the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. The Buddha is the one who taught the way to eliminate the defilements, the cause of suffering. The Dharma is ultimate liberation, the elimination of the defilements, the cause of suffering. The Sangha is the community that is practising the path which leads to the elimination of the defilements, the cause of suffering, and the attainment of true liberation. Some may say that there is only one refuge. This is not correct. Why not? It is because whether a Tathāgata appears in the world or not, the true Dharma is always present, even though it cannot be discerned. It can only be discerned when a Tathāgata appears in the world. One should not, therefore, only go for refuge to the Buddha. Whether a Tathāgata appears in the world or not, the true Dharma is always present, even if there is no-one to make it known. It is the community of the Buddha's disciples who receive the Dharma. One should not, therefore, only go for refuge to the Sangha.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.20, p.1061b04–14, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Going for refuge to the Buddha *M.51*

Living beings are ungrateful. Tathāgatas appear in the world, blazing with wisdom and compassion to dispel the darkness.

With a mind filled with great compassion, he sees all living beings suffering immeasurable pain, forever bound to the triple world.[351]

None but the Buddha, the Supreme Teacher, amongst all men and gods, is a refuge.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.9, text 278, p.444b15–20, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The Buddha as the key refuge *M.52*

*In this passage, Queen Śrīmālā says to the Buddha that the highest refuge is the Buddha/*Tathāgata *refuge, for it is from going for refuge to the Buddha that one then goes for refuge to the Dharma and the Sangha. The Sangha is made up of those of the various Buddhist paths that look to the Buddha; the Dharma is the path to attaining the Dharma-body of a Buddha. The* Tathāgata *refuge encompasses the other two, and is timeless, ultimate reality.*

351 That is, the entirety of conditioned existence: see 'three realms' in Glossary.

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The eternal refuge, the infinite refuge until the very end of time, the refuge for those who have not transcended the world, but who do not rely on the world, is the Tathāgata, the arhant, the perfectly awakened Buddha.

The Dharma is the path of the single vehicle.[352] The Sangha is the community of the three vehicles. These two refuges are not ultimate refuges, they are only partial refuges. Why is this? The path of the single vehicle is concerned with the attainment of the absolute Dharma-body. There is nothing superior to the Dharma-body of the Single Vehicle.

Out of fear,[353] the communities of the three vehicles go for refuge to the Tathāgata. They practise the path of non-attachment, aiming for unsurpassed perfect awakening. This is why these two refuges are not ultimate refuges, but limited ones.

Living beings who have been trained by the Tathāgata, who go for refuge to the Tathāgata, and who reach the further shore of the Dharma, develop minds of joyful faith, and go for refuge to the Dharma and Sangha. These are the two refuges. Going for refuge to the Dharma and Sangha is not the same as going for refuge to the Tathāgata. To go for refuge to ultimate reality is to go for refuge to the Tathāgata. Why is this? There is no difference between Tathāgata refuge and the other two refuges. The Tathāgata is in truth the triple refuge.

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 353, ch.5, p. 221a02–15; cf., *Taishō* vol. 11, text 310, p.676b16–29, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.53 The Sangha and Dharma as the way to the Three Refuges

To make offerings to the Sangha is to honour both the Buddha Jewel and the Sangha Jewel. To contemplate the wonderful qualities of the Buddha's Dharma is to fully honour the Three Jewels.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.22, p.1065a20–22, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.54 *Tathāgata*-relics and perfect wisdom

This passage sees worship of physical relics of the Buddha (see Th.94) as important, but as secondary to devotion to the perfection of wisdom.

Śakra[354] said, 'Blessed One, it is not that I do not revere the relics of the Tathāgata. I certainly do revere the relics of the Tathāgata, Blessed One. The relics of the Tathāgata, which have arisen, Blessed One, from this perfection of wisdom are worshipped. Therefore, Blessed One, by worshipping this perfection of wisdom, one is also fully worshipping the relics of the Tathāgata. Why is this? It is because the relics of the Tathāgata have arisen from the perfection of wisdom. It is like in Sudharmā, the hall of the gods, Blessed One. When I am seated on my divine seat, my divine sons wait on me. When I am not seated there, my divine sons, out of reverence for me, honour my seat, circumambulate it, and depart. Why is this? It is because on that seat, Śakra, first among

352 That takes all, eventually, to Buddhahood, even though they may initially aim at lower goals.

353 Of the various forms of suffering in the round of repeated rebirths.

354 The King of the Gods (Pāli Sakka).

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the gods, teaches the Dharma to the gods of the *Thirty-three*. In just the same way, Blessed One, the perfection of wisdom is the exalted cause and condition which brings about the omniscience of the Tathāgata, the arhant, the perfectly awakened Buddha. The relics of the Tathāgata rest on omniscience, but they are not a cause or condition for the arising of knowledge. Therefore, Blessed One, the perfection of wisdom, which is the cause of the knowledge of omniscience, is worshipped through the relics of the Tathāgata.

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, ch.4, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Devotion to Avalokiteśvara *M.55*

This passage praises the heavenly bodhisattva *Avalokiteśvara and his power to help when called on. His name means 'The Lord who Looks (in Compassion)', and he is seen as the embodiment of compassion. In Chinese, he is known as Guanyin (Kuanyin) and in Tibetan as Chenresig. The protective powers said to come from calling on him are similar to those attributed to protective* paritta *chants in Theravāda Buddhism (see Th.95). The wondrous powers attributed to recollecting Avalokiteśvara, such as fires going out and swords breaking, can perhaps be seen as poetic ways of referring to the power of compassion to change hearts and actions. Chan/Zen generally understands them in purely internal spiritual terms: for example 'danger on the ocean', i.e. a storm, is anger, 'fire' is desire, 'fetters' are simply those of fear, and animals only threaten one who has ill-will. Likewise the power of Theravada* parittas *can be seen as drawing on the power of moral truths.*

2. He looks on every part of the world. His vow is like an ocean. ... Listen now to the actions of Avalokiteśvara.

3. For inconceivably many countless hundreds of eons, his vow was purified by many countless thousands of Buddhas. Let me tell you what I have heard.

4. Living beings who hear him or see him, and recollect him often will unfailingly remove all of their pain and sorrow in this world.

5. If an evil-minded person tries to kill you by throwing you into a fire-pit, recollect Avalokiteśvara, and the fire will be quenched and extinguished.

6. If you fall into danger on the ocean, the abode of nāgas, sea-monsters, and gods, recollect Avalokiteśvara, and you will never be captured by the King of the Ocean. ...

9. If you are surrounded by enemies with swords in their hands, intent on doing you harm, recollect Avalokiteśvara, and their minds will instantly be filled with loving kindness.

10. If you are standing at the place of execution, about to be killed, recollect Avalokiteśvara, and then the sword will shatter to pieces.

11. If you are bound and shackled by fetters of wood or iron, recollect Avalokiteśvara, and your fetters will immediately fall away. ...

14. If you are surrounded by fierce, terrifying animals with razor-sharp teeth, recollect Avalokiteśvara, and they will immediately scatter in all directions. ...

17. He sees living beings suffering from many hundreds of kinds of pain, oppressed by many kinds of pain. He looks on them with the power of his purified understanding, and protects them.

18. He possesses extraordinary supernormal powers and vast un-

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derstanding, and is well-trained in the application of skill in means. He manifests himself everywhere, in all worlds in the ten directions,[355] and in all Buddha-fields without exception.

19. He always soothes those living beings who have been reborn in frightening lower states of existence, in hell, as animals, or oppressed by birth, old age, disease, and death. ...

20. You[356] are radiant with beauty. You are radiant with loving kindness. You are radiant with the most excellent wisdom and understanding. You are radiant with compassion. You are radiant with purity. You are to be adored, fair-faced and beautifully radiant.

21. You are completely spotless, pristine light; incandescent with the light of the sun of knowledge; the light of a flame that the wind cannot blow out. Blazing forth, you illuminate the world.

22. You roar your compassion, your good qualities, and your loving kindness. With beautiful qualities, you are loving, and completely reliable. You extinguish the fires of the defilements in living beings, raining down the nectar of the Dharma-rain.

23. If you[357] are involved in strife, quarrels and disputes, or in the midst of a terrifying battle, recollect Avalokiteśvara, and the hosts of your wicked enemies will be pacified.

24. His voice is like thunder. His voice is like a drum. His voice is like the ocean. His wonderful voice is like Brahmā's. His voice surpasses this world. Recollect Avalokiteśvara.

25. Recollect him, recollect him, and long for him. In death, in hardship, in distress, that pure being Avalokiteśvara will be your protection, your refuge, and your sanctuary.

Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra, ch.24, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Individual responsibility and personal effort

M.56 The power of aspiration

Son of good family, aspiration is the root of all good qualities. Aspiration is the condition for the attainment of perfect awakening and the fruit of liberation.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.20, p.1062b27–29, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.57 The perfection of vigour, employed for the benefit of others

At that time, the Blessed One said to Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra, 'If a bodhisattva, a great being, wants to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening, then when he first sets his mind on awakening, he should think, "Everything I possess, my body and my mind, should

355 The eight compass-points, as well as the nadir and the zenith – in other words, in all directions.

356 Here, the text addresses Avalokiteśvara directly.

357 Here the text switches back to addressing the listener, rather than Avalokiteśvara himself.

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be employed for the benefit of others, so that all their wishes will be fulfilled."

A serving boy bears in mind that whenever he walks, stands, sits, or lies down, he should not do so arbitrarily but with submission to his master. If he intends to go out to the market he should first ask for his master's permission. He should only take food or drink if he has obtained his master's permission. He should only do what his master wants. In just the same way, when bodhisattvas, great beings, first set their minds on awakening, in order to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening, should think, "Whatever I possess, my body and mind, should not be employed arbitrarily, but only for the benefit of others. Everything that I intend to do should be directed towards that end." bodhisattvas thus rely on the perfection of vigour, making a great effort, and never deviating from the perfection of vigour. They take a vow to do whatever will benefit living beings. All bodhisattvas, great beings, should dwell in the perfection of vigour in this way.

A treasured horse which is being ridden thinks, "I should not cause the rider's body to sway. I should not get tired, or damage the harness. Whether I move backwards, forwards or stop, moving slow or fast, I will serve the rider, taking good care of him, without behaving in such a way as to make him angry." In just the same way, bodhisattvas, great beings who are practising the perfection of vigour do not act according to their own desires, but according to others' hopes. They act for the benefit of others. They act in order to take care of others. They act in such a way that no defilements or unwholesome actions will arise in their bodies. At first people show no gratitude to bodhisattvas, great beings, but bodhisattvas have no expectation of reward. Their only aim is to help people in various different ways. Bodhisattvas, great beings, therefore, take care of the minds of others, act according to the will of others, and realize different kinds of happiness and bliss in order to develop the perfection of vigour. Bodhisattvas, great beings, thereby take hold of the perfection of vigour, and bring benefit and happiness to living beings as if they were bringing benefit and happiness to themselves, without ever getting tired. This is how a bodhisattva dwells in the perfection of vigour, making a great effort.

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol. 7, text 220, p.1050b01–26, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The middle way

The need for effort that is neither too slack nor too forced *M.58*

This passage makes a simple but important point about spiritual effort (cf. L.32)

There was a renunciant who was reciting scriptures at night, and who was melancholy. His mind was full of regret and doubt, and he wanted to return to ordinary life. The Buddha called the renunciant, and asked him, 'When you lived as a householder, what did you do?' He replied, 'I used to play the lute.' The Buddha said, 'What happened if the strings were too slack?' He replied, 'It wouldn't make any sound.' The Buddha asked, 'What if the strings were too taut?' He said, 'The

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sounds would be short and dampened.' The Buddha asked, 'What if the strings were neither too slack nor too taut?' He said, 'The sounds were clearly audible.' The Buddha said to the renunciant, 'Practising the path is like this. If you adjust your mind properly, you will be successful on the path.'

'*Sūtra* of Forty-two Sections'/*Sishierzhang jing,* section 33,*Taishō* vol.17, text 784, p.723c13–17, trans, D.S.

M.59 The need for a balanced attitude

This passage sees the middle way of practice as neither becoming trapped in mental constructions, nor dogmatically avoiding any mental constructions. Its nature, though, is hard to pin down.

Suvikrāntavikrāmi, mental constructions are one extreme and avoiding any mental constructions is the other extreme. Bodhisattvas avoid these two extremes. If bodhisattvas do not engage with extremes or non-extremes, then they do not see a middle way either. If they see a middle way, and engage with a middle way, then they engage with an extreme. The middle way is not something to be engaged with, to be seen, to be made manifest.

Moreover, Suvikrāntavikrāmi, you should know that what is known as the middle way is nothing other than the eightfold path. This path is neither to be approached by apprehending phenomena, nor by observing phenomena.

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol. 7, text 220, p. 1092a25–b03, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.60 The noble eightfold path

This passage sees the factors of the path as unfolding from the first, right view - a perspective of non-clinging that sees that things lack any fixed essence.

Anantajñāna, what is the meaning of the path and purification of the path? The path is the noble eightfold path, namely, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditative concentration. Right view is the eradication of the false view that personality is somehow related to an essential self. It is beyond the scope of all views. If all views are completely purified in all situations, this enables one to recognize all forms of right thought. Both particularizing thought and generalizing thought is not really thought at all.[358] Avoid both particularizing thought and generalizing thought, not indulging in erroneous ways of thinking, do away with wrong thinking. This view leads to right livelihood. Seeing the idea of livelihood, seeing the purity of livelihood, practising pure livelihood, leads to a right view of the purified activity of body, the purified activity of speech, and the purified activity of mind. Engaging in right action, with a right view of the activity of speech, enables one to see and to understand what right speech is. Practising right speech leads to a purified view of right effort. Engaging in right effort based on right view leads to mindfulness that does not involve recollection, fixing the mind on anything, or grasping. Dwelling in right mindfulness

358 It lacks any separate essence that is 'thought'.

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with a purified mind enables one to maintain a right view of meditative concentration. In meditative concentration, there is nothing to base oneself on, yet it leads one to purify one's view of meditative concentration.

Anantajñāna, when bodhisattvas, great beings, view things in this way, they attain a purified right view in all situations, remaining on the path of purity. This path of purity is the way a good man practises. It is honoured by the wise, loved by the noble ones, and praised by the Tathāgatas.

Varma-vyūha-nirdeśa, section 7 of the *Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Taishō* vol.11, text 310, pp.120c29–121a16, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The middle way avoids dualistic separation of things *M.61*

This passage sees the path as being based on the perception that all is empty of an inherent nature/inherent existence, due to the deep interrelation of all phenomena, such that a dualistic separation of things, even of nirvana and the world of suffering, is not valid.

To practise in the middle way with insight into the essence of non-duality is to know the truth of the path. ... To understand that one cannot ultimately get hold of the path leading out of suffering, and to see with right understanding that everything is empty of inherent existence, is to understand the path of the middle way.

'The Six Noumenal and Phenomenal Perfections *Sūtra*'/*Da-sheng-li-qu-liu-boluomiduo jing, Taishō* vol.8, text 261, p 913c23–914a01, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The principle of dependent arising and the middle way I *M.62*

This passage is based on the idea that the dependent arising of all phenomena means that they neither exist in a solid, unchanging, substantial way, nor are they completely non-existent - they form an ephemeral flux whose nature is difficult to conceptualise. The middle way of practice is based on knowing this middle way kind of existence, and not being attached to things as if their nature was different from this.

Dependent arising is neither being nor non-being. It is neither real nor unreal.

Entering into the middle way is thus said to be non-attachment.

Mahā-avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, p. 316c21–22, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The principle of dependent arising and the middle way II *M.63*

This passage holds that the conditioned, inter-dependent nature of phenomena (see Th.156ff, M.130 and 138) is so profound that it cannot be comprehended by means of concepts and conventional thought, as it is ineffable and identical to nirvana. It is useful to describe it, though, as having a 'middle way' nature that is beyond the extremes of complete non-existence and solid, substantial existence (cf. Th.168 and V.32). Truly understood, phenomena lack any spatial location, but ordinary people do not understand this, and grasp at one of two extreme views about the nature of reality.

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All phenomena are included in dependent arising. Nothing which is included in dependent arising can be said to be either a middle or an extreme. If one leaves conventional expressions aside, one cannot get hold of anything, not even the least phenomenon.

Anantavyūha, now you should contemplate the non-existence of phenomena,[359] the Dharma without extremes which is known as the middle way. As an expression of skill in means, it is said that there is awakened wisdom which maintains the Dharma, but one cannot get hold of anyone who maintains the Dharma. As there is nothing to get hold of, there is no conventional expression.

Anantavyūha, you and all the wise should understand that the real essence of all phenomena is that they do not come, they do not go, they are indivisible, unceasing, not the same, not different, and ultimately arrive at the other shore of all phenomena. There is no phenomenon whatsoever that does not arrive on the other shore. The other shore is nirvana. The essence of all phenomena is undoubtedly nirvana. This is why they are said to be ineffable. It is only as a matter of convention that one can talk about the middle way. This middle way is the way that leads to nirvana. Nevertheless, there is no nirvana one can go to. If nirvana were something one could go to, then all phenomena would be involved in coming or going. The nature of all phenomena is the same. This is why it is said that nirvana is not something one can go to. This, Anantavyūha, is what is called the middle way.

This middle way, though, is not just the middle way. Why is this? It is because it neither increases nor decreases. It involves no extremes, it involves no grasping. If something involves no extremes, why are there extremes? Phenomena have no location, and so by their nature have no extremes. Ordinary people do not see this, hold on to a view that there are extremes. Because of this view that there are extremes, they cannot attain liberation, because in reality nothing is located anywhere.

It is only as an application of skill in means, Anantavyūha, that the Tathāgata has resolved in his wisdom to teach the middle way.

Ananta-mukha-pariśodhana-nirdeśa, section 2 of the *Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Taishō* vol.11, text 310, pp.29c15–30a04, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The path of the *bodhisattva* as superior to those of the disciple and the solitary-buddha

For a discussion of these three paths in a Theravāda context, see ThI.6.

M.64 The *bodhisattva* path as superior

The first passage affirms that the bodhisattva *path is the superior Buddhist path. The ideal Buddhist does not take either of the relatively short paths, the path to becoming an awakened disciple or a solitary-buddha, but compassionately takes the long path to perfectly awakened Buddhahood, remaining in*

359 I.e. they lack existence as substantial entities.

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the round of rebirths for innumerable lives to aid others, while developing the qualities needed for Buddhahood. The second passage explains that those who have attained the sixth of the ten stages of the bodhisattva *path, and who are not yet certain of attaining perfectly awakened Buddhahood, are still superior to (*arhant*) disciples and solitary-buddhas.*

Son of good family, there are three Dharmas, lower, intermediate, and higher. One who practises the lower Dharma is a disciple.[360] One who practises the intermediate Dharma is a solitary-buddha. One who practises the higher Dharma is a Buddha. ...

Son of good family, when a bodhisattva has reached the stage of liberation, he will never perform actions that will lead to rebirth in the (divine levels of the) realm of sensual desire, the realm of form, or the formless realm. He takes a vow to always be born wherever he can benefit living beings. If he knows with certainty that his actions will lead to rebirth amongst the gods, he will immediately transform these actions in order to be born as a human being. The actions referred to here are generosity, the observance of the precepts, and the practice of meditation.

When a disciple has reached the stage of initial liberation, no more than three lives will pass before he realises complete liberation. The same applies to the solitary-buddha.

A bodhisattva, a great being, who has reached the stage of initial liberation never regresses, even though innumerable lives will pass before he attains complete liberation. With his mind irreversibly set on awakening, he is superior to all disciples and solitary-buddhas.

Singalaka asked the Buddha, 'Blessed One, why do living beings train their minds in order to attain awakening?' The Buddha replied, 'Son of good family, there are two reasons why living beings train their minds in order to attain awakening. The first is that they reflect that although those who have attained the wisdom of the sixth stage of the bodhisattva path might regress, they are still superior to all disciples and solitary-buddhas. The second is that they diligently seek the unsurpassed fruit of practice.'

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.4, p.1037b09–10, 14–21, and ch.2, p.1035b18–23, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The superior wisdom of a perfectly awakened Buddha *M.65*

Son of good family, the Tathāgata's understanding of all conditioning factors is perfect. Disciples and solitary-buddhas also acquire an understanding of all conditioning factors in relation to the Four Truths of the Noble Ones, but this understanding is incomplete. This is why they are not called perfectly awakened Buddhas ... Disciples and solitary-buddhas have eliminated the defilements but their habitual tendencies remain. The Tathāgata has uprooted even the basis for the remaining habitual tendencies of the defilements. This is why he is called a perfectly awakened Buddha.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch. 5, p.1038b, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

360 Presumably meaning the highest kind of a disciple, an arhant, as the other two above are kinds of awakened beings.

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M.66 Only Buddhas completely end spiritual ignorance and fully experience nirvana

In this passage, Queen Śrīmālā gives the Mahāyāna teaching that only perfectly awakened Buddhas have completed the task of spiritual transformation.

Blessed One, arhants, solitary-buddhas and bodhisattvas who are in their final existence are submerged in latent ignorance. They do not know, and do not perceive various phenomena. If they do not know, and do not perceive what should be destroyed, they cannot ultimately destroy it. As these things are not destroyed, their liberation is said to be incomplete, with flaws remaining. It is not flawless liberation. Their purity is said to be incomplete, not all-encompassing. This is called the achievement of incomplete virtue, virtue which is not all-encompassing. It is the achievement of incomplete liberation, incomplete purity, incomplete virtue. If one partially understands what is painful, partially eliminates its origination, partially realizes its cessation, and partially practises the path, one is said to have partially attained nirvana. The partial attainment of nirvana is said to be oriented towards the realm of nirvana. If one fully understands what is painful, fully eliminates its origination, fully realizes its cessation, and fully practises the path, one is said to have attained eternal nirvana within the world – the impermanent decaying world, the impermanent, disease-ridden world. It offers support and protection to a world which (otherwise) has no support, and no protection. Why is this? It is because nirvana is attained because phenomena are neither superior nor inferior, because wisdom is the same for everyone, because liberation is the same for everyone, because purification is the same for everyone. This is why nirvana has one taste, the same taste for everyone, the taste of freedom.

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 353, ch.5, p.220a25-b10; cf. *Taishō* vol. 11, text 310, p. 675c08–18, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.67 The *bodhisattva* works tirelessly within *saṃsāra* while attuned to nirvana

In this passage, in which the Buddha addresses bodhisattvas *who have come from other worlds, he details how a* bodhisattva *should tirelessly work within the conditioned world to aid beings, contemplating the qualities of the unconditioned, nirvana, yet not allowing themselves to leave the conditioned world of rebirths. This is what is sometimes called 'nirvana which is not based on anything'* (apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa)*.*

The Blessed One said, 'Children of good family, there is a liberation for bodhisattvas which is called "The Destructible and the Indestructible". You should train yourselves in it. What does it consist of? "The Destructible" refers to what is conditioned, and "the Indestructible" refers to what is unconditioned. A bodhisattva should not destroy what is conditioned, nor base himself upon what is unconditioned.

Not destroying what is conditioned means not wavering from great loving kindness; not giving up great compassion; not losing hold of the mind of omniscience which is based upon firm resolve; not growing weary of bringing living beings to maturity; not abandoning the methods for bringing people together; giving up one's body and one's life to protect the Dharma; never being satisfied with the extent of one's

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wholesome roots; basing oneself on the dedication of one's wholesome actions to awakening; not being lazy in one's striving for the Dharma; not being tight-lipped when teaching the Dharma; being greatly enthusiastic about seeing and worshipping the Tathāgatas; fearlessly choosing to be reborn; not being elated by success or bowed by failure; not looking down on those who are not learned; having the kind of affection for the learned that a pupil has for his teachers; bringing those who are filled with the defilements towards profound understanding; not becoming absorbed by the pleasures of solitude; not pursuing one's own happiness, but becoming absorbed by the pursuit of others' happiness; seeing meditative absorption, meditative concentration, and meditative attainments as being like the Avīci Hell; seeing saṃsāra as being like a palace surrounded by gardens;[361] seeing beggars as being like spiritual friends; seeing the abandonment of everything one owns as being like the attainment of omniscience; seeing immoral people as being like rescuers; seeing the perfections as being like one's mother and father; seeing the practices which help one to attain awakening as being like one's attendants; never ceasing to accumulate wholesome roots, creating a Buddha-field which possesses the good qualities of all Buddha-fields; being unrestricted in making offerings for the purpose of attaining the bodily marks and secondary characteristics of a Buddha; adorning one's body, speech, and mind by not engaging in any evil acts; purifying one's body, speech, and mind by wandering through saṃsāra for countless eons; avoiding despondency by listening attentively to the good qualities of the Buddha with an attitude of mental heroism; defeating the defilements, which are one's enemies, by taking up the sword of wisdom; taking up the burden of all living beings by understanding the categories of existence, the elements, and the sense-bases; attacking Māra's armies with flaming vigour; seeking the Dharma in order to free oneself from pride; being satisfied with little in order to get hold of the Dharma and to seek knowledge; not getting involved with worldly things in order to please worldly people; not disrupting one's spiritual practice in order to conform to the world; cultivating the higher knowledges in order to be able to see all actions; developing knowledge, mindfulness, and dhāraṇīs[362] in order to be able to remember everything one has heard; understanding the faculties of others in order to remove the uncertainties of all living beings; basing oneself upon non-attachment in order to teach the Dharma; developing the faculty of clear expression in order to give clear expression to non-attachment; experiencing good fortune as a human being or a god by purifying one's practice of the ten wholesome kinds of action; attaining the state of a brahmā-god by cultivating the four limitless qualities;[363] asking the Buddhas to teach the Dharma, praising them, rejoicing in them, and making offerings to them in order to hear them speak; attaining restraint of body, speech and mind, and becoming absorbed in all Dharma-teach-

361 That is, he would rather be in the midst of things, helping others, than be attached to secluded meditations.

362 Powerful formulas or incantations, similar to mantras.

363 Loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity

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ings in order to realise the spiritual practice of a Buddha; assembling the bodhisattva Sangha in order to spread the Mahāyāna; and being vigilant so that one does not lose any good quality. This, children of good family, is how a bodhisattva who is devoted to the Dharma does not destroy what is conditioned.

What, then, does it mean to not base oneself upon what is unconditioned? A bodhisattva thoroughly familiarises himself with emptiness,[364] but does not realise emptiness. He thoroughly familiarises himself with freedom from characteristics, but does not realise freedom from characteristics. He thoroughly familiarises himself with freedom from aspirations,[365] but does not realise freedom from aspirations. He thoroughly familiarises himself with non-accomplishment, but does not realise non-accomplishment. He examines impermanence, but is not content with his wholesome roots. He examines what is painful, but chooses to be reborn. He examines the non-existence of an essential self, but he does not give himself over to destruction. He examines peace, but does not cultivate absolute peace. He examines solitude, but makes effort with his body and his mind. He examines the state of having no foundation, but does not abandon the foundation of good qualities. He examines freedom from grasping, but takes on the burden of living beings. He examines freedom from intoxicating inclinations, but follows the course of saṃsāra. He examines non-action, but acts in order to bring living beings to maturity. He examines the absence of an essential self, but does not waver in his great compassion for living beings. He examines freedom from birth, but does not fall prey to the limitations of a disciple.[366] He examines hollowness, triviality, insubstantiality, ownerlessness, and homelessness, but his beneficial karma is not hollow, his knowledge is not trivial, his discrimination is perfect, he is initiated into self-arisen knowledge and skilled in self-arisen knowledge, he makes his meaning clear, and he bases himself on the lineage of the Buddha. This, children of good family, is how a Bodhisattva who is devoted to the Dharma does not base himself on what is unconditioned, and yet does not destroy what is conditioned.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.10, sections 16–18, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The need for a spiritual teacher

M.68 The need to change one's ways, and how a good guide can help in this

This passage has a bodhisattva *warning people of the need to avoid evil ways that will bring them future suffering.*

The Buddha said to Lord Yama,[367] 'Living beings in this world are erratic. It is in their nature to be headstrong and stubborn. They are dif-

364 This and the following three kinds of freedom are aspects of nirvana and the realisation of it.

365 Desire-laden thought directed at attaining some goal.

366 I.e. He does not seek to go beyond rebirths as soon as possible.

367 The Lord of Death, who meets those who have just died.

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ficult to train, difficult to lead. The great bodhisattva spends hundreds of thousands of eons saving them from suffering, leading them quickly to liberation. For living beings who have acted in an unwholesome way, and even fallen into great evil, the bodhisattva employs the power of his skill in means to rescue them from their basic karmic circumstances and lead them to an understanding of their previous existences.

Because living beings in this world are tied down by the weight of their own evil habits, they cycle in and out of states of hardship. The bodhisattva therefore labours for countless long eons, working to release beings such as these.

They are like people who have lost their way home, and accidentally take a dangerous road. On that dangerous road, there are many yakṣas,[368] as well as tigers, wolves, lions, snakes, vipers, and scorpions. These lost travellers will soon come to harm on that dangerous road. Then they meet a spiritual friend who is able to explain things skilfully, and who knows how to avoid danger, yakṣas, poisonous creatures and so forth. When he encounters the lost travellers on the dangerous road, he says to them, "Greetings, gentlemen. Why are you travelling on this road? What range of skills do you possess which allow you to avoid all of its dangers?"

When they hear his words, they suddenly realise that they are travelling on a dangerous road, and they turn back in order to escape from it. Their spiritual friend has them join hands, and leads them away from the dangerous road with its perils and poisonous creatures, and onto a safe road. When they are calm and contented, he says to them, "Lost travellers, do not take that road again in the future. Once you are on it, it is hard to find a way out. It can cost you your lives."

The travellers who had been lost were very moved. When they were about to depart, the spiritual friend says to them, "If you see any other travellers, men or women, whether you know them or not, tell them that this road is filled with dangers, which may cost them their lives. Do not let them go to their deaths." In the same way, the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, out of great compassion, rescues living beings who are suffering because of their unwholesome actions. He causes them to be born amongst the gods, where they experience great happiness.

All of these living beings who have acted in an unwholesome way in the past understand the suffering that such actions bring, and once they have escaped them, they will never endure them again. Just like the lost travellers who accidentally took a dangerous road, and who encountered a spiritual friend who led them to safety, they will never take that road again. If they encounter others, they will advise them not to take that road, saying, "We took that road ourselves by accident, but now that we have escaped from it, we will never take it again. If we were to find ourselves travelling on that road again by accident, we would not recognise it as the same dangerous road on which we had travelled before, and we might lose our lives." Falling into harmful states of existence is like this.

368 Supernatural beings or spirits, often malevolent or mischievous.

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Through the power of his skill in means, the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha rescues living beings and causes them to be born amongst the gods. If they were to turn around and, tied down by the weight of their previous actions, end up in the hells, they might never be able to escape.'

Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrva-praṇidhāna Sūtra, Taishō vol.13, text 412, ch.8, pp.784c28–785a27, trans. D.S.

M.69 The benefit of having wise and virtuous friends

These passages are from a text on the spiritual pilgrimage of Sudhana, who goes to fifty three spiritual friends - people and beings of many different types - for spiritual guidance.

[3. Mañjuśrī teaches:] At that time, when the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī had uttered those verses, he said to Sudhana, 'Son of good family, if you want to attain omniscience, you should resolve to look for spiritual friends. Son of good family, you should never tire of looking for spiritual friends. You should never get bored of serving spiritual friends. You should do what your spiritual friends advise you to do. You should never find fault with you spiritual friends' application of skill in means.' ...

[5. Sāramegha teaches:] Now, the young man Sudhana, who had been inspired by his spiritual friends, who had followed his spiritual friends' advice, who bore his spiritual friends' words in mind, who cherishing his spiritual friends deeply, reflected, 'Thanks to my spiritual friends I have been so blessed as to be able to see the Buddhas. Thanks to my spiritual friends, I have been so blessed as to be able to hear the teachings. My spiritual friends are my respected teachers, because they have shown me the way to the Dharma of the Buddhas. My spiritual friends are my clear eyes, because thanks to them I have been able to see Buddhas filling the whole of space. My spiritual friends are truly the landing from which I can proceed to the lotus pond of Tathāgatas.'

Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, p.334a1-9, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.70 The *bodhisattva's* spiritual friends: the Buddha, advanced *bodhisattvas*, and the perfections

The Blessed One then addressed the Venerable Subhūti once more, saying, 'A bodhisattva, Subhūti, a great being who has set out with the firm intention to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening should from the very outset serve, honour, and worship his spiritual friends.'

Subhūti said, 'Blessed One, who are these spiritual friends of a bodhisattva ...?'

The Blessed One then said to the Venerable Subhūti, 'The Buddhas, Subhūti, the Blessed Ones, and those bodhisattvas, those great beings, who are skilled in the path of the bodhisattva, who instruct and advise him in the perfections, and who teach and explain the perfection of wisdom to him – these, Subhūti, are the spiritual friends of a bodhisattva, a great being. The perfection of wisdom itself, Subhūti, is the spiritual friend of a bodhisattva, a great being. Indeed, Subhūti, all six of the perfections[369] are the spiritual friends of a bodhisattva, a great

369 Generosity, ethical discipline, patient acceptance, vigour, mediation and wisdom.

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being. The six perfections are his teacher ... his path ... his vision ... his torch ... his light ... his protection ... his refuge ... his place of rest ... his sanctuary ... his island ... his mother ... his father. The six perfections lead him to knowledge, to understanding, to unsurpassed, perfect awakening.

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, ch.22, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Developing the awakening-mind (*bodhi-citta*)

In the Mahāyāna, the arising of the awakening-mind, the mind set on attaining the awakening (bodhi) *of a perfect Buddha, is seen as a potent and profound event, which transforms a person and energises the compassionate actions that bring them closer to Buddhahood (see also V.33–9.). In a deeper sense, the awakening-mind is also the awakened mind itself: 'ultimate', rather than 'relative' awakening-mind.*

Reasons to develop the awakening-mind *M.71*

The bodhisattva Samantabhadra addressed Samantamati and the assembly of bodhisattvas: 'Children of the Buddha, there are ten reasons that bodhisattvas, great beings, develop the awakening-mind. What are they? They are: to teach, guide, and train all living beings; to rid all living beings of their bundle of suffering; to bring the bliss of tranquillity to all living beings; to rid all living beings of their delusion; to lead all living beings to the understanding of a Buddha; to serve and worship all the Buddhas; to following the Buddha's teaching so as to please the Buddha; to see the wonderful bodily marks of all Buddhas; to penetrate the all-embracing wisdom of all the Buddhas; and to manifest the powers and the self-confidence of a Buddha.'

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, p.282b6–15, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The bodhisattva Dharmamati said to Indra: 'Son of the Buddha, when bodhisattvas first set their minds on awakening, ... they do not only do so in order to train all living beings, guiding them in the observance of the five precepts and the path of ten wholesome kinds of action, teaching them to dwell in the four meditative absorptions, the four limitless qualities, and the four formless meditative states, instructing them in how to obtain the fruits of the stream-enterer, the once-returner, the non-returner, the arhant, and the solitary-buddha, and in how to set their minds on awakening.

They also do so in order to sustain the unbroken lineage of the Tathāgata, to embrace all worlds, to liberate all living beings, to gain a thorough understanding of the evolution and dissolution of all worlds, to gain a thorough understanding of the purity and impurity of all living beings in all worlds, to gain a thorough understanding of the essential purity of all worlds, to gain an understanding of the mental pleasures, the defilements, and the habitual tendencies of all living beings, to understand how all living beings die and are reborn, to understand the means and the capabilities of all living beings, to understand the mental activity of all living beings, to perceive all living beings in the three

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times, to understand that all the realms of the Buddhas are the same. It is in order to do all this that they set their minds on unsurpassed perfect awakening.'

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, p. 89b1–19, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.72 Aids for arousing the awakening-mind

Children of good family, there are five things that lead one to set one's mind on awakening. The first is close companionship with spiritual friends. The second is the elimination of hate in the mind. The third is following the instructions of one's teachers. The fourth is the development of compassion in the mind. The fifth is practising diligently and with vigour.

There are five more things that lead one to set one's mind on awakening. The first is not seeing the faults of others. The second is not becoming discouraged even when one sees such faults. The third is not becoming arrogant when one does good deeds. The fourth is not becoming jealous of others when they do good deeds. The fifth is regarding each living being as being like one's only child.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.2, p.1035c08–13, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.73 Reasons for a *bodhisattva*'s compassion

Son of good family, a sage has a profound vision of all living beings sinking in saṃsāra's great ocean of suffering and vows to rescue them. Because of this, he develops compassion for them. ... Although he sees that living beings are full of resentment and hatred, he treats them like family. Because of this, he develops compassion for them. He sees that living beings go astray from the right path, as they don't have a guide. Because of this, he develops compassion for them. He sees that living beings have sunk down into the mud of the five kinds of sensual desire, that they indulge in them and are unable to escape. Because of this, he develops compassion for them. He sees that living beings are trapped by their property, their spouses, and their children, and are unable to give them up. Because of this, he develops compassion for them. ... He sees that living beings delight in being reborn in the realm of existence, although they are afflicted by all the defilements. Because of this, he develops compassion for them. ... He sees that although living beings long for happiness, they do not create the causes of happiness for themselves, and although they do not like suffering, they create the causes of suffering for themselves. ... Because of this, he develops compassion for them.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.3, p. 1036a11–26, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.74 A *bodhisattva's* compassionate aspirations

Vimalakīrti said, 'Children of good family, there are eight qualities which a bodhisattva should possess in order to go safely and without obstruction from this world-system called Earth to a completely pure Buddha-field at death. What are these eight qualities? He should think, "I should help all living beings, and not seek any pleasure from them. I should thus strive to take on the suffering of all living beings, and

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give them my wholesome roots.[370] I must not bear ill-will towards any living being. I must regard all bodhisattvas with the affection a student has for his teacher. I must not oppose any Dharma-teachings, whether or not I have heard them before. I must not be jealous of others' achievements, but contemplate my mind deeply with no desire to achieve anything myself. I must examine my own shortcomings, and not point out others' faults. I must delight in vigilance and resolve to cultivate all possible good qualities." ...'

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.9, section 18, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The *bodhisattva*'s compassionate vows *M.75*

This passage is a graphic expression of a bodhisattva*'s urge to save other beings.*

In the 'Noble Vajradhvaja Sūtra' he (the Buddha) says, '... a bodhisattva, a great being, with mindfulness and clear comprehension, his mind pure and profound ... (thinks), "... the mass of suffering of all beings, ... all that, I take away through being reborn in hell,[371] and in the realms of misfortune. May all living beings be removed from those places. I take that burden of suffering on myself,[372] determined to endure it. I do not turn back. I do not flee. I am not afraid. I do not tremble. I do not fear. I do not turn away. I do not despair.

Why is this? It is because I must remove the burden of all living beings. This is not the fulfilment of my own desire, it is my vow to rescue all living beings. I must liberate all living beings. I must save the whole world from the wilderness of birth, from the wilderness of old age ... of disease ... of falling into rebirth ... of all faults ... of all misfortunes ... of the entirety of saṃsāra ... of the thicket of all wrong views ... of the loss of wholesome qualities, and from the wilderness of the arising of ignorance. I must liberate living beings from all of these wildernesses. They are entangled in the net of craving, filled with the hindrance of ignorance, encumbered by the craving for existence, destined for death, flung into the cage of suffering, fond of their prison, foolish, unreliable in their commitments, full of uncertainty, always disagreeing, encountering discomfort, with no proper refuge, frightened, alone in the spinning cycle of existence. ...[373] I work to establish the realm of unsurpassed understanding for all living beings. I am not intent on liberating only myself. Using the raft of the mind set on omniscience, I must pull all living beings from the evil states of saṃsāra. I must pull them back from the great precipice. I must liberate them from all misfortune. I must ferry them across the river of saṃsāra. I have taken the mass of suffering of all living beings on myself. I have the strength to embrace all of the suffering that lies in all of the misfortune in all

370 By means of the supernormal powers a *bodhisattva* acquires as a result of their practice of meditation, they are seen as able to literally take the pain and suffering of other living beings on themselves.

371 A *bodhisattva* may choose to be born in the hell-realms in order to relieve the pain of the beings there: in practical ways, through his or her soothing presence, and by teaching the Dharma. The *bodhisattva* Kṣitigarbha is particularly well known for taking rebirth in the hells for this purpose (see M.68).

372 See note to M.74.

373 This is Śāntideva's abbreviation.

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world-systems. I will not trick any living being out of their wholesome roots. I am determined to endure every misfortune for countless eons. I will endure every single state of misfortune in every single world-system, in order to liberate all living beings.

Why is this? It is because it is better that I alone should be in pain, rather than all of these living beings who have fallen into states of misfortune. I must give myself into bondage, and the whole world must be redeemed from the wildernesses of hell, the animal realm, and the realm governed by Yama.[374] I must embrace the entire mass of painful sensations with my own body, for the sake of all living beings.[375] In order to help all living beings, I must be able to become their equal. I must be trustworthy, speaking the truth, creating harmony when I speak.

Why is this? It is because my cultivation of a mind set on omniscience is based on all living beings, and I must liberate the whole world. I did not set out to attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening in order to obtain the delights of sensual pleasures ... Why is this? It is because the delights of the world are no delights at all. To be devoted to sensual pleasures is to be devoted to Māra."'

Śikṣā-samuccaya of Śāntideva, ch. 16, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.76 The *bodhisattva*'s wisdom, loving kindness, and compassionate urge to save others

This passage sees the bodhisattva*'s wisdom as issuing in his or her kindness and compassion.*

The Blessed One said, 'Subhūti, if all of the living beings in this world were to suddenly acquire human form, cultivate minds set on unsurpassed perfect awakening, maintain such minds as long as they lived, and to honour, revere, venerate, worship, reverence, and glorify all of the Tathāgatas as long as they lived, and then give gifts to all living beings, and dedicate the karmic benefit from that act of generosity to unsurpassed perfect awakening, do you think, Subhūti, that those bodhisattvas, those great beings, would produce a great deal of karmic benefit by doing so?'

Subhūti said, 'Yes, Blessed One, they would produce a great deal of karmic benefit – a great deal, Fortunate One.'

The Blessed One said, 'Subhūti, a son or daughter of good family who is a bodhisattva, a great being, and who dwells with their mind absorbed by the perfection of wisdom for just one day produces even more karmic benefit. Why is this? It is because, Subhūti, whenever a bodhisattva, a great being, dwells with mind absorbed by the perfection of wisdom for a day and a night, he is worthy of being venerated by all living beings. Why is this? It is because there are no other living beings who have minds filled with loving kindness like the mind of that bodhisattva, that great being, except the Buddhas, the Blessed

374 See note to M.158.

375 What is being indicated in this passage is the willingness of the *bodhisattva* to endure any form of pain or suffering, rather than let any living beings endure it. This echoes the willingness of the *bodhisattva* to take the pain and suffering of living beings on himself/herself mentioned in M.74.

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Ones. Why is this? It is because, Subhūti, the Tathāgatas are peerless. The Tathāgatas are unequalled, Subhūti. The qualities of the Tathāgatas, the arhants, the perfectly awakened Buddhas, Subhūti, are inconceivable.

How, Subhūti, does a son or daughter of good family produce so much karmic benefit? A bodhisattva, a great being, by means of the wisdom he possesses, Subhūti, sees all living beings as heading for death. Because of this, he is seized by great compassion. With his divine eye, he sees in full detail innumerable, incalculable, untold, countless living beings who possess karma which will have an immediate effect: living beings who have been born into unfavourable circumstances, who are being destroyed, who are caught in the net of wrong views, who do not have access to the path. He sees other living beings who have been born in favourable circumstances, but have lost those favourable circumstances. When he sees this, he becomes deeply dismayed.

He extends his great loving kindness, his great compassion to all those living beings, and the mind becomes absorbed by them. He thinks, "I will be the protector of all these living beings. I will release all of these living beings from all of their suffering." He does not, though, associate this or anything else with a label. This, Subhūti, is the great vision of the wisdom of a bodhisattva, a great being, by which he attains unsurpassed, perfect awakening. By dwelling in this state, Subhūti, a bodhisattva, a great being, becomes worthy of the offerings of the whole world, and does not turn back from unsurpassed, perfect awakening. When their minds are established in the perfection of wisdom, and they are approaching omniscience, worthy of gifts, they purify the gifts given to them which they consume: robes, alms food, materials for sleeping and sitting on, medicine to treat disease, and utensils.[376] Therefore, Subhūti, a bodhisattva, a great being, should dwell with mind absorbed by the perfection of wisdom. He will thereby not consume his alms for no purpose, but teach all living beings the path, extend his radiance far and wide, release living beings from saṃsāra, and cleanse the vision of all living beings.'

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, ch.22, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA

Faith

Three kinds of faith *V.24*

This passage distinguishes three types of faith, which develop stage by stage. 'Lucid' - as opposed to blind - faith, is informed faith that is usually triggered by a religious experience of awe. 'Aspiring' faith is inspiration to enter the path and gain personal experience of the Dharma. As one follows the path, 'convinced' faith in the extraordinary qualities of in the Three Jewels is gained and there is total trust in them.

376 These are the gifts given to a monk or a nun.

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Just as going for refuge is the gateway to all the teachings, the gateway to going for refuge is faith. Therefore, it is extremely important to develop a firm faith within before you go for refuge. There are three kinds of faith: lucid faith, aspiring faith, and convinced faith.

'Lucid faith' is what arises when we are suddenly moved to faith by a lucid experience of the Buddhas' great compassion, which can happen on account of things like entering a temple with many representations of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind inside; or meeting holy persons and spiritual masters face to face, or hearing about such people's great qualities and life-stories of liberation.

'Aspiring faith' is what arises when we have heard about the pains of saṃsāra and the lower realms, and we want to be free from them; when we have heard about the pleasures of the higher realms and liberation, and we want to attain them; when we have learnt about the karmic benefits of wholesome actions, and we want to actualize them; and when we have seen the drawbacks of unwholesome actions, and we want to avoid them.

'Convinced faith' is what arises when we have comprehended the good qualities and extraordinary spiritual energy of the Three Precious Jewels, and we trust in them from the depth of our hearts; when we have found them to be the most precious refuge which are unfailing in all times and circumstances, and that we can always count on them in whatever we do – whether we are happy or sad, sick or healthy, alive or dead. It is a faith of total trust in which one has no source of hope and confidence other than the Three Jewels. As it was said by the Precious Master of Oḍḍiyāna (Padmasambhava) 'Through the faith of total trust, you receive spiritual energy. When your mind is freed from doubt, you can achieve whatever you wish.'

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.272–73, trans. T.A.

V.25 The significance of faith

Faith is a source of spiritual energy that is indispensable to the development of good qualities. The speed of one's progress on the path is directly related to the degree of one's faith and devotion.

Faith is like a seed which gives rise to all good aspects of positive qualities. If you have no faith, it is like having a fire-burnt seed. As is said in a sūtra, 'People without faith cannot give rise to positive qualities, just as a fire-burnt seed cannot give rise to a green sprout.'

In that way, faith is foremost of the seven riches of the noble ones.[377] As is said, 'The precious wheel of faith rolls on night and day on the road of wholesomeness.' That being the case, it is like a treasure that is the most supreme gem among all riches, and thus an inexhaustible source of good qualities; it is like the feet by which we walk the path of liberation and the hands by which we collect all wholesome qualities in our mind-stream. As is said, 'Faith is a supreme gem, treasure, and feet; like hands collecting what is wholesome.'

So, even though the Three Jewels have an inconceivable amount of compassion and spiritual energy, their ability to enter our mind-stream

377 The rest are ethical discipline, learning, generosity, moral shame, concern for consequences, and wisdom.

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solely depends on our faith and devotion. If we have immense faith and devotion, then the Three Jewels' compassion and blessing that can enter us will also be tremendous. Likewise, if we have mediocre faith and devotion, then only a mediocre amount of compassion and blessing can enter (our mind-stream); and if we have no more than just a little faith and devotion, then only a very small amount of their compassion and blessing is able to enter us. But if we have no faith and devotion at all, then we will not receive any compassion or blessing. If we have no faith, then even meeting the Buddha himself and being taken under his care would be useless – as it was for the monk Sunakṣatra, whose story has already been told,[378] or for the Buddha's cousin, Devadatta.[379]

Even today, if one invokes him with heartfelt faith and devotion, the Buddha himself will appear in front of one, and bless one with spiritual power. For Buddha's compassion, there is no near or far; as is said, 'For whoever thinks of him with faith, the Buddha will be present to grant him empowerment and blessing.' And the Great Master of Oḍḍiyāna has also said: 'For faithful persons, both men and women, Padmasambhava will depart – he will sleep outside their door. My life will never have an end – before each person having faith, a Padmasambhava will appear.'[380]

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.273–5, trans. T.A.

A parable of faith *V.26*

The story below demonstrates the extraordinary power of faith. It also sheds some light on the Buddhist cult of relics (see Th.94). It shows how their spiritual efficacy can depend on the faith of devotees, regardless of the physical origin of those sacred objects – which might sometimes be dubious.

When one is convinced of one's faith, the Buddha's compassion can manifest in anything. Having faith is illustrated by the parable of the old woman who was enlightened by a dog's tooth.

Once upon a time, there was an old woman, who had two sons. One of them would often go to India on business. His old mother told him: 'India happens to be the country where the perfectly awakened Buddha reached awakening on the Vajra-seat. Would you please bring me a sacred relic from India so that I can make prostrations to it?' She asked him many times, but her son would always forget about her request and would never bring her anything. One day, when her son was leaving for India again, she told him: 'This time, if you do not bring me any sacred relic from India for my prostrations, I shall kill myself and die in front of you!'

The son travelled to India, concluded his business, and returned home, forgetting his mother's request. It was not until he had almost arrived at her house that he remembered what she had said. 'What shall I do now?' he thought to himself. 'I have not brought my old mother anything for her prostrations. If I arrive home without a sa-

378 See WPT p.147.

379 See L.43 and 44 on his plots to try to kill the Buddha.

380 The Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism considers Padmasambhava, the founding master of their tradition, a 'second Buddha'.

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cred relic, she will commit suicide.' Looking all around him, he noticed a dog's skull lying by the roadside. He pulled out one of its teeth and wrapped it in silk. When he arrived home, he gave it to his mother, saying, 'This is one of the Buddha's canine teeth. If you prostrate to it, he will answer your prayers.'

The old woman believed that the dog's tooth was actually the canine tooth of the Buddha, and was inspired to faith. As she did prostrations and made offerings to it all the time, many relics descended on the dog's tooth. When the old woman died, spheres of rainbow lights and other signs (of high spiritual accomplishment) appeared. Even though the dog's tooth had no spiritual power, as the old woman, through the power of her great faith, believed it to be the actual tooth of the Buddha, it was imbued with the Buddha's blessing, so that eventually it was not any different from the canine tooth of the Buddha.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.275–76, trans. T.A.

Going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha

V.27 Refuge prayer

This traditional refuge prayer, common to all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, is attributed to Atiśa.[381]

Until I reach awakening, I go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha Jewels.

By the beneficial karma of practising the six perfections,[382] may I achieve awakening for the sake of all sentient beings!

V.28 Different motivations for going for refuge

This passage spells out the difference between the 'Hīnayāna'[383] *and Mahāyāna attitudes toward taking refuge.*

One may go for refuge out of two motivations. The common motivation is that one is unable to bear one's own suffering, and the special motivation is that one cannot bear the suffering of others.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.124–25, trans. T.A.

V.29 Refuge ceremony

The ritual of going for refuge is performed in front of a spiritual teacher or a guru. From the two kinds of refuge ceremonies - simple and elaborate - described by Gampopa in the eighth chapter of his 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', what follows is the simple one.

First, the disciple supplicates the teacher (to perform the ceremony). Then the teacher takes preparations by making offerings in front of the Three Jewels' representations or, if that is not possible, he imagines the Three Jewels in the sky and gives them homage and offerings men-

381 See. V.10.

382 The six main practices of a *bodhisattva*: generosity, ethical discipline, patience, vigour, meditative absorption, and wisdom (see M.100–06 and V.42–54). Note that this refuge vow also includes the Mahāyāna vow of *bodhicitta* (see V.37).

383 On this, see note on 'Lesser vehicle' to V.13.

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tally. Then the disciple should say after the teacher as follows: 'All Buddhas and bodhisattvas, please listen to me! Teacher, please listen to me! I - named so-and-so - from now on until I reach the heart of awakening, go for refuge to the Buddha, the most supreme human; go for refuge to the Dharma, the most supreme freedom from attachment; and go for refuge to the Sangha, the most supreme community!' Sincerely he should repeat it three times.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', p.125, trans. T.A.

The spiritual teacher

The need for a spiritual teacher *V.30*

In chapter three of his 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', Gampopa presents three similes for the role of a teacher in one's spiritual life. The third one, an extended version of the Buddha's parable of the boat/raft (of Dharma, see Th.23 and M.20), is especially interesting.

The spiritual friend is like a guide when you travel an unknown path; like an escort when you travel to a dangerous place; or like a ferryman when you cross a big river. ...

When crossing a big river, if you board the raft or boat without a ferryman, you may not reach the other shore but drown into the water or get carried away by the current. But if you have a ferryman, his endeavours will help you reach the other shore. Likewise, when crossing the ocean of saṃsāra, you may board the boat of the supreme Dharma, but you may drown into saṃsāra or get carried away by its current unless you have a spiritual friend, who is like a ferryman. That is why it is said, 'Unless you have an oarsman, your boat cannot reach the other shore. You may have all good qualities complete but still without a master you cannot reach the end of becoming (saṃsāra).'[384]Therefore, if you attend on a spiritual friend, who is like a ferryman, you will certainly reach the other side of saṃsāra, the land of nirvana. As the 'Flower-array Sūtra' has it, 'The spiritual friend is like a ferryman who saves you from the ocean of saṃsāra.' That is why you should attend on a spiritual friend who is like a guide, and escort, and a ferryman.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.31–4, trans. T.A.

The qualities of a perfect teacher *V.31*

Before accepting someone as one's spiritual friend, one has to examine the person's spiritual qualities in order to make sure that one is not going to be led astray by a false 'master'. This passage contains some guidelines given by tradition for carrying out such an evaluation.

A spiritual friend who is an ordinary being (rather than a Buddha or a great bodhisattva) should have either eight, or four, or (at least) two good qualities.

The first set (of qualities) is listed in the 'Stages of the Bodhisattva': 'If the spiritual friend of a bodhisattva has eight qualities, he is totally

384 Source unknown.

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perfect in every respect. What are those eight qualities? He upholds the bodhisattva discipline, he has heard many bodhisattva scriptures, has realization, has compassion for others, he is fearless, patient, never depressed, and eloquent.'

The second set comes from the 'Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras': 'A perfect bodhisattva teacher has vast learning, can eliminate doubts, is trustworthy, and teaches the two realities' (MSA XII.5). (Explanation:) Since he has heard many teachings, the teacher has vast learning. Because he has great wisdom, he can eliminate others' doubts. Because he behaves like a supreme being, he is trustworthy. And he teaches the two realities, those characterized by thorough defilement (saṃsāra) and total purification (nirvana).

The third is described in 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening', 'A true spiritual friend is well-versed in the Mahāyāna, and has excellent bodhisattva discipline. Never leave him even for the sake of your life' (BCA V.102). That is, he should be expert in teaching the Mahāyāna and he should maintain the bodhisattva vow.

Once you have found such a spiritual friend, you should attend on him in three ways: by rendering him respectful service, by showing him faithful devotion, and by diligently practising (his teachings). ...

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.38–9, trans. T.A.

Practising the middle way

V.32 The middle way as freedom from the two extremes

This passage describes the Mahāyāna understanding of the middle way as a non-conceptual view of reality, one which is free from the extreme views of permanence and nihilism (in the sense of complete non-existence - an idea similar to that expressed in Th.168 and also found in M.63). On a more subtle level, it is also understood as freedom from any conceptions even about the mind's identity. Eventually the middle way, not even conceptualizing itself, is the perfection of wisdom.[385]

Apprehending phenomena as existent or apprehending them as non-existent are both faulty, because they represent falling into the extremes of permanence and nihilism. As said in (Nāgārjuna's) 'Fundamental Treatise on the Mille Way', '"Existence" is the view of permanence; "non-existence" is the view of nihilism' (MMK XV.10a). Falling into the extremes of permanence and nihilism is to be deluded, and if one is deluded, one cannot attain liberation. In the 'Precious Garland' he also says, 'To apprehend this mirage-like world either as existent or as non-existent is delusion, and if there is delusion, there can be no liberation' (RV I.56).

So, if one asks how liberation can be attained, the answer is that one can attain liberation through practising the middle way, which is free from the two extremes. As the 'Precious Garland' says, 'One who knows phenomena as they are (i.e. unproduced or unborn)[386] will not rely on

385 For more on the Middle Way (Madhyamaka) philosophy of the Mahāyāna, see M.138 and V.75–6.

386 See V.76.

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either (extreme of existence or non-existence) but attain liberation' (RV I.57b). The 'Fundamental Treatise on the Mille Way' also says, 'Therefore, the wise should not adhere to either (the extreme of) existence or non-existence' (MMK XV.10b).

One may wonder what exactly the middle way is, which avoids the two extremes. It is described thus in the 'Heap of Noble Jewels Sūtra': 'Kāśyapa! How should a bodhisattva correctly apply himself to the Dharma? He should apply himself to the middle way which is the correct assessment of phenomena. And what is the correct assessment of phenomena? Kāśyapa, it is thus: That they are permanent is one extreme; that they are impermanent is the other extreme.[387] What is in the middle between those two extremes is indiscernible and imperceptible; it cannot be indicated or conceptualized. Kāśyapa, this is the middle way which is the right assessment of phenomena. Kāśyapa! (The view of a permanent) self is one extreme, that of non-self (as utter denial of any kind of self) the other extreme. What is in the middle between those two extremes is indiscernible and imperceptible; it cannot be indicated or conceptualized. Kāśyapa, this is the middle way which is the correct assessment of phenomena. Kāśyapa! Saṃsāra is one extreme, nirvana (as complete cessation) is the other extreme. What is in the middle between those two extremes is indiscernible and imperceptible; it cannot be indicated or conceptualized. Kāśyapa, this is the middle way which is the correct assessment of phenomena.'[388] Also, Śāntideva says, 'The mind cannot be found either inside, outside (the body), or anywhere else, neither intermingled nor separate from it, and so cannot exist at all. Sentient beings, therefore, are naturally in nirvana'[389] (BCA IX.103b-104).

Therefore, avoiding conceptualization in terms of the two extremes is what is called the middle way, but the middle way should not be conceptualized either. Without apprehending it as something 'out there', it is to dwell beyond the intellect. Atiśa also said, 'Consider this: The past thought has already ceased to exist, the future thought has not yet come into being, and the present thought is extremely elusive. The mind does not have any colour or shape; similar to the sky, it does not have any concrete identity.'[390] Also, the 'Ornament of Clear Realization' says, 'Not to be found in either extreme of outside or inside, nor in between the two, being the same in the past, present, and future, it is found to be the perfection of wisdom.'

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.285–87, trans. T.A.

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387 Though things are impermanent in a relative sense, ultimately they lack any identity of their own (see V.76), and therefore they cannot even be characterized as 'impermanent'.

388 The quote is from the *Kāśyapa-parivarta Sūtra* of the *Ārya-Ratnakūṭa sūtra*-collection. Its interlocutor is Mahā-kāśyapa, one of the Buddha's main disciples who is said to have inherited the Mahāyāna lineage.

389 This investigation concerns the identity of the mind, which is found not to exist (inherently) anywhere inside or outside the body. If the mind cannot be found anywhere, it cannot be defiled by any defilement, so its true nature must be nirvana. See also next footnote.

390 This unidentified passage from Atiśa points out that the mind cannot be found anywhere in the past, present, or future. So, in addition to being unlocated spatially, in terms of the body (see above), neither can it be found anywhere in time. Being utterly undetermined, its true nature is found to be nirvana.

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The awakening-mind (*bodhi-citta*)

Bodhi-citta is the single most important concept in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism (see M.71–6). It means the mind (citta) oriented to attaining a perfectly awakened Buddha's awakening/enlightenment (bodhi) for the sake of benefitting others, and refers to the mind of a bodhisattva at different stages of spiritual development. Entering the path is marked by what is called the 'arousing of awakening-mind', understood as giving rise to the firm aspiration to reach awakening, in the sense of perfectly awakened Buddhahood, for the sake of others. Beyond this, the awakening-mind is a compassionate mental orientation that should be the source of engaged practice to move towards Buddhahood and help others to do likewise.

V.33 Definition of the awakening-mind

Arousing the awakening-mind is defined as (giving birth to) the wish for truly complete awakening for the sake of others. As said in the 'Ornament of Clear Realization': 'Arousing the (awakening-) mind is the wish (to achieve) complete awakening for the sake of others.'

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', p.134, trans. T.A.

V.34 Śāntideva on the benefits of the awakening-mind

'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening' (Bodhicaryāvatāra) is among the most famous literary classics of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Authored by the great monk-philosopher Śāntideva in the eighth century CE, it has kept inspiring both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhist ever since. The verses below from its first chapter (titled 'The benefits of the awakening-mind') are particularly well-known, and have been quoted in many later texts on arousing the awakening-mind.

4. This freedom and connection[391] is very difficult to find. If I do not take advantage of this opportunity now to attain what can be accomplished by a human being, will I ever get it back again?

5. Like a flash of lightening from among clouds on a dark night, illuminating everything for an instant – that is how rarely, by the Buddha's might, a beneficial insight ever occurs in the world.

6. This is because wholesome thoughts are always feeble, while unwholesome ones are too strong and irresistible. Could they be overpowered by any wholesomeness other than the complete awakening-mind?

7. This is what the Capable Lord, who has cultivated it throughout many ages, has found to be most beneficial – it can help an immeasurable multitude of people to easily attain the highest state of bliss.

8. If you wish to put down the hundred pains of existence, dispel all the pain of sentient beings, and also undergo much happiness (on the path), then you should never forsake the awakening-mind.

9. As the awakening-mind is born in those tormented ones captive in the prison saṃsāra, from that very moment they will be called 'princes (or princesses) of the Tathāgata', and will be honoured by worldly gods and humans.

10. You should firmly apprehend this that is known as the awaken-

391 The precious human life of freedom and connection (see V.14).

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ing-mind because it is like the best kind of gold-making elixir; this impure body you have taken is transformed by it into the invaluably precious body of a Buddha.

11. As it is so valuable and has been well-assayed by the sole leader of beings (the Buddha) in his immeasurable wisdom, those who wish to avoid rebirth in saṃsāra should firmly apprehend this precious awakening-mind.

12. Every other wholesome action is like a plantain tree; it yields fruit but once, then it dies away. The tree of awakening-mind, however, brings fruit all the time; rather than dying away, it multiplies.

13. Even if you have committed terrible misdeeds – once you put your trust in (awakening-mind), as in a body-guard, you are instantly saved from the great danger (of falling to the lower realms). Why should the heedless not put their trust in it?

14. It will surely consume (the effects of) all major wrong-doing in an instant, like the (all-consuming) conflagration at the end of times ...

'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening', I.4–14, trans. T.A.

Types of awakening-mind I *V.35*

After celebrating those benefits, Śāntideva proceeds to distinguish between two types of awakening-mind.

15. In brief, the awakening-mind is known as having two types; the awakening-mind of aspiration, and the awakening-mind of engagement.

16. The skilful should understand the distinction between the two in the same way as the difference between wishing to go (somewhere) and actually being on the way.

17. The awakening-mind of aspiration, while in saṃsāra, is very fruitful, but it does not yield continuous karmic benefit as the mind of engagement does.

'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening', I.15–17, trans. T.A.

Types of awakening-mind II *V.36*

Besides containing a very down-to-earth explanation on the above distinction, this passage introduces an even more fundamental classification of awakening-mind into the 'relative' and the 'ultimate' types. The latter is born from a direct insight into reality at a later stage in the path.

When classified according to its nature, there are two types of awakening-mind: relative and ultimate.

Within relative awakening-mind, there are two further sub-types: the mind of aspiration and the mind of engagement. As it is said in 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening', 'The skilful should understand the distinction between the two in the same way as the difference between wishing to go (somewhere) and actually being on the way' (BCA I.16). If you want to go somewhere like Lhasa, for example, first you have to make up your mind 'I am going to go to Lhasa.' Just like that, first you have to think 'I am going to make all sentient beings attain the rank of complete Buddhahood.' This is the mind of aspiration which is like wishing to go (somewhere). Then you arrange for the travel provisions, pack horses and other preparations for the actual journey to Lhasa, and finally really set out on the road. Similarly, in order to make

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all sentient beings attain the rank of complete Buddhahood, you decide to practise generosity, maintain ethical discipline, cultivate patience, make sustained effort, develop meditative absorption, and train your mind in wisdom; and then you actually start practising these six perfections. This is the mind of engagement, which is like actually being on the way.

Both the mind of aspiration and the mind of engagement are relative awakening-mind. Through training for a long time on the paths of accumulation and connection[392] while relying on relative awakening-mind, you finally enter the path of seeing[393] where you have a direct realization of emptiness – knowledge without any conceptual elaboration – and you understand the actual nature of all dharmas. That realization is the arising of ultimate awakening-mind.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.354–55, trans. T.A.

V.37 Taking the vow of aspiration

The following passage from chapter nine of Gampopa's 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation' contains a short liturgy for taking the vow of awakening-mind at the beginning of the bodhisattva *path.*

The teacher should instruct the student in the following way: 'Meditate on loving kindness and compassion for a while, thinking "Wherever space expands, there are sentient beings. Wherever there are sentient beings, there are defilements. Wherever defilements, there are wrong actions. Wherever wrong actions, there is suffering. All those sentient beings suffering in pain have been my fathers and mothers (in previous existences: see V.13). All of my fathers and mothers have been very kind to me. Now all of my kind fathers and mothers are drowning in the ocean of saṃsāra. They are tormented by an incredible amount of suffering. There is no-one to protect them. How badly fatigued they are, how anguished! What could I do to make them happy? What could I do to free them from the suffering?" Then meditate on the following thought: "Presently I am unable to help them. In order to act for their benefit, I must attain the state of a perfectly awakened Buddha, who has no more faults, who is complete with all good qualities, and who is able to act for the sake of the entire world of sentient beings".'

Then the disciple should repeat three times after the teacher: 'All Buddhas and bodhisattvas abiding in the ten directions, please listen to me! Teacher, please listen to me! I – named so-and-so – (now take this vow) on the foundation of the wholesomeness derived in this and other lifetimes from the generosity, ethical discipline, and meditation I have performed, asked others to perform, or have rejoiced in. Just as the Tathāgatas, the perfectly awakened Buddha-arhants, the Blessed Ones and the great bodhisattvas who are now abiding on the highest stages (of the path) had first (in the beginning) aroused the mind set

392 The first two of the five series of paths in Mahāyāna Buddhism, those of: accumulation, connection, seeing, development, and that of the adept. See footnote to v.59 of V.10.

393 The third of the five paths. In the Mahāyāna, it is also the point of entering the first (noble) *bodhisattva* stage.

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on great, unsurpassed, fully perfect awakening, in the same way, I – named so-and-so – from now until I reach the heart of awakening, arouse the mind set on great, unsurpassed, fully perfect awakening in order to deliver sentient beings who have not been delivered (to the other shore), to liberate beings who have not been liberated, to relieve all those who have not been relieved, to lead to nirvana those who have not been led to nirvana".'

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.166–68, trans. T.A.

Thoroughly apprehending awakening-mind *V.38*

Such liturgies as the above may have been inspired by classical Indian literary examples such as the one quoted below – another set of famous verses from 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening', on the heroic dedication of a bodhisattva.

7. Through the wholesome actions I have amassed, may all the suffering of every sentient being be dispelled!

8. As long as wandering beings are not yet recovered from their sickness, may I be their medicine, their doctor, and their nursing attendant!

9. Showering on them a rain of food and drink, may I eliminate the pain of hunger and thirst, and in the eon of famine,[394] may I turn into food and drink!

10. May I turn into an inexhaustible treasure for all those who are poor and destitute, and may I be readily available to them as all kinds of articles and necessities!

11. In order to help all sentient beings, may I offer them without reservation my body, my possessions, and (the fruition of) my wholesome deeds in the past, present, and future!

12. Giving up all, I will (eventually) go to nirvana – my mind will have passed beyond sorrow; if everything needs be given up anyway, the best is to give it all for sentient beings!

13. I have already proffered this body to the mercy of all embodied beings; let them kill it, abuse it, or torture it as they please!

14. Though they may use my body as a plaything, an object of contempt and ridicule, why should I care about it when I have already given it away?

15. Let them do to it whatever they wish as long as it does not cause them any harm; whenever I am just looked upon (by beings), may they never be left without benefit!

16. Whether they are angry with me, whether they have faith in me, may it always be a source of fulfilment of all their wishes![395]

17. Whoever speaks badly of me, whoever does me any harm, whoever disparages me – let them all have the good fortune to reach awakening!

394 There are three shorter periods of time that appear towards the end of each 'intermediate eon' (approx. 16,798,000 years according the the *Abhidharmakośa*) during which a world exists before coming to an end (see Th.63) – the eon of famine, the eon of sickness, and the eon of strife.

395 That is to say, may they attain what brings actual fulfillment, namely, progress on the path.

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18. May I be a shelter for the homeless, a guide for those who set out on the path; may I become a raft, a boat, and a bridge for those wishing to cross over!

19. May I become an island for those who seek one, a bed for those who wish to take a rest; and may I become a servant to all those embodied beings who need be served!

20. May I become a wish-fulfilling jewel, a cornucopia, a wonder-working spell, a panacea, a wishing tree, and a cow of plenty for embodied beings!

21. Just like earth and the other elements of nature, and just like space, may I always be a source of sustenance for the many kinds of countless sentient beings!

22. May I thus become a source of life, in every way, in all the realms of sentient beings wherever space pervades – until they all pass into nirvana!

'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening', III.7–22, trans. T.A.

V.39 Three degrees of courage

This passage distinguishes three types of awakening-mind based on courage, which refers to the degree of a bodhisattva*'s determination to help sentient beings. The most courageous type turns out to be the one who wants to be the last to attain Buddhahood.*

There are three types of awakening-mind according to the degrees of one's (spiritual) courage.

(1) A king first wants to overcome his rivals, lead his army to victory and make himself king, then only does he wish to take care of his subjects. Similarly, someone arousing the royal type of awakening-mind first wants to attain the status of Buddhahood himself, then only does he wish to lead all sentient beings on to the stage of a Buddha.

(2) A ferryman wants to reach the other shore together with all the people and passengers boarding the boat with him. Likewise, someone arousing the awakening-mind of a ferryman wants to attain the rank of complete Buddhahood together with all sentient beings.

(3) Shepherds drive their flock of sheep in front of them, first making sure that they find enough grass and water and are not threatened by wolves and other predators. Following after them, they themselves walk behind. In the same way, those arousing the awakening-mind of a shepherd first want to lead all sentient beings of the three realms to the status of Buddhahood; then only do they wish to become Buddhas themselves.

Among those three, the first, royal type – called 'the awakening-mind of high aspiration' – is the least courageous. The second, ferryman's type – called 'the awakening-mind of excellent knowledge' – is moderately courageous. It is said to be the way someone like the Noble Maitreya aroused his awakening-mind. The shepherd's type – called 'incomparable awakening-mind' – is the most courageous of all. It is said to be the way someone like the Noble Mañjuśrī aroused his awakening-mind.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.352–53, trans. T.A.

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Graded stages of the path

The abbreviated points of the graded path V.40

This passage is an example of the Graded Stages of the Path literature developed in Tibet based on Atiśa's model text (V.10). Authored by Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the spiritual founder of the Gelukpa school, it is one of the most concise formulations of the path to awakening. The sections presented here are the ones dealing with the path of the superior person, i.e. the bodhisattva.

[The awakening-mind]

14. Arousing the awakening-mind is the central plank of the supreme vehicle; the basis and support for vast bodhisattva conduct. Turning everything into the two accumulations (of karmic benefit and knowledge) like a gold-making elixir, it is a treasure of karmic benefit amassing countless wholesome actions. Having understood that, heroic princes of the Victorious One (i.e. bodhisattvas) uphold that precious supreme mind as their innermost practice. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way; you, who aspire for liberation, should also do likewise.

[The six perfections]

15. Generosity is a precious jewel fulfilling the wishes of wandering beings, and the best weapon to cut the knot of avarice. This bodhisattva deed gives rise to undaunted courage which will spread one's fame throughout the ten directions. Having understood that, the wise always adhere to the supreme path of renouncing their bodies, possessions, and karmic benefits. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

16. The water of ethical discipline can wash off the defilements caused by your wrongdoings; it is cooling moonlight to the scorching heat of the defilements. Magnificent among beings, like the highest mountain, one (who has discipline) makes everyone bow down to him without the use of force. Having understood that, sublime beings guard the rules of ethical discipline they have adopted as they would their eyes. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

17. Patience is the finest ornament worn by those having strength and the best way to endure the hard torment of the defilements. It is a garuḍa[396] preying on your enemy, the snake of hatred, and the best armour to wear against harsh words (from others). Having understood that, the wise one dons the armour of supreme patience, and practises it in every possible way. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

18. If you don the armour of unflinching vigour, your understanding and good qualities will grow like the waxing moon. All your actions will become meaningful and you will be able to accomplish whatever you start doing just as you wish. Having understood that, princes of the Victorious One persevere a great deal to eliminate laziness. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

19. Meditative absorption is the king wielding power over the mind. When settled it is immovable like the King of Mountains; when applied it engages with wholesome objectives inducing the great bliss of a serv-

396 A mythical bird seen as preying on snakes.

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iceable body and mind. Having understood that, powerful yogis always practise meditative absorption to subdue inimical distraction. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

20. With the eyes of excellent wisdom you can see things as they are; it is the only way to eradicate (the process of) becoming[397] from the root. Wisdom is the best quality extolled by the Buddha in the scriptures; it is known as the supreme lamp dispelling the darkness of delusion. Having understood that, the wise who aspire for liberation make much effort to develop wisdom. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

[Unification of calm abiding (*śamatha*) and special insight (*vipaśyanā*)]

21. Do not consider mere one-pointed concentration powerful enough to cut the root of saṃsāra. And however much you exercise wisdom, you will not be able to counteract the defilements without the path of calm abiding (and its concentration). But if your wisdom which decisively understands the nature of things is mounted on the horse of unwavering calm abiding, then with the sharp weapon of middle way reasoning you can destroy all conceptual supports of extreme views, and through your vast wisdom capable of proper analysis you can enhance your intelligence of realizing (ultimate) reality. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

22. Cultivating one-pointed concentration you will attain meditative absorption – that is needless to say. But when you have noticed that even proper analytical thinking gives rises to stable meditative absorption on the nature of reality, then you are making marvellous efforts to accomplish the union of calm abiding and special insight. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

23. When you have unified method and wisdom through cultivating a space-like experience of emptiness in meditation and an illusion-like experience of emptiness as post-(meditation) attainment, you will be praised as someone who is perfecting the conduct of bodhisattvas. Having understood that, those with the good fortune (to practise the Dharma) should not be content with a one-sided path (of practising only method or only wisdom). I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

[The need for tantra]

24. Having developed in this way the common path that is necessary for the two supreme paths of the causal (perfections) and resultant (tantra) vehicles,[398] and relying on a learned captain for protection, I have embarked on the ocean of tantras, and making use of his perfect oral instructions, I have made good use of this human life of freedom and connection. I, the yogi, have practised it in that way ...

'The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path', Toh. 5275 #59, trans. T.A.

397 The ongoing process of *saṃsāra*.

398 The perfections are cultivated as the cause of awakening, but the way of *tantra* works by drawing on the power of awakening as a powerful path *to* it.

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CHAPTER 7

ETHICS

THERAVĀDA

Wholesome and unwholesome actions

Wholesome and unwholesome actions and their roots *Th.102*

This passage highlights certain bodily, verbal and mental actions as akusala *– unwholesome or unskilful (not informed by wisdom) – and abstaining from them as* kusala, *wholesome, skilful. The former spring from one or more of three kinds of 'roots': the motives of greed or hatred, and a deluded orientation (see Th.26). The latter spring from the opposites of these, literally non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion, i.e. anti-greed etc.: generosity and renunciation, loving kindness and compassion, and wisdom.*

Friends, what is the unwholesome, and what are the roots of the unwholesome? Destroying life, taking what is not given (stealing), engaging in misconduct with respect to sensual pleasures (sexual misconduct), telling lies, divisive speech, harsh speech, idle chatter, intense desire, malice, and wrong view are unwholesome.

What are the roots of the unwholesome? Greed, hatred and delusion are the roots of the unwholesome.

What is the wholesome? Abstaining from destroying life, from taking what is not given, from engaging in misconduct with respect to sensual pleasures, from telling lies, from divisive speech, from harsh speech, and from idle chatter, absence of intense desire, absence of maliciousness and right view are the wholesome.

What are the roots of the wholesome? Non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion are the roots of the wholesome.

Sammā-diṭṭhi Sutta: *Majjhima-nikāya* I.47, trans. P.D.P.

Avoid actions which bring real harm to others or oneself *Th.103*

In this passage, the Buddha teaches his son, Rāhula, when he was a young novice monk under him. Rather than focussing on the inner roots of bad and good actions, as in the above passage, he focuses on their consequences as the grounds for avoiding or doing them: whether or not they lead to suffering for oneself or others. Reflection on these aids wholesome action.

'Rāhula, what is the purpose of a mirror?' 'Venerable sir, it has the purpose of reflection.' 'Rāhula, in the same manner, after repeated reflection you should do bodily actions, after repeated reflection you should do verbal actions, after repeated reflection you should do mental actions. Rāhula, when you desire to do some action with the body, you should reflect on that very action of the body thus: "This action that I wish to do with my body – would this bodily action of mine be conducive to self-harm and would it be conducive to the harm of others or of both? Is it unwholesome? Does it have painful consequences,

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ripening in suffering?" When reflecting, if you know, "this action of the body would be conducive to self-harm ... suffering", Rāhula, if possible you should not do such action of the body.

Rāhula, when reflecting, if you know, "this action that I wish to do with my body would not be conducive to self-harm, not be conducive to the harm of others or of both, it is wholesome, it leads to happy consequences, ripening in happiness", Rāhula, you should do such action of the body.

Even while doing that action with the body, you should reflect on that very action of the body thus: "Is this action that I am doing conducive to self-harm ... suffering?" Rāhula, if that is so, stop doing that action ... If you know, "this action of the body is not conducive to self-harm ...", then continue doing it.

Also, having done such action of the body, you should reflect. "That action I did with the body, was it conducive to self-harm ... suffering?" When reflecting, if you know it was so, then you should confess, reveal, make known that action of the body to the teacher, or to intelligent associates faring the holy life. Having confessed, revealed, and made known you should set yourself to restraint in the future. Rāhula, when reflecting, if you know "this action of the body I did, was not conducive to self-harm ... suffering'", you should dwell with that very joy and gladness, training yourself day and night in wholesome qualities.' [The same is then repeated for verbal and mental actions.]

Rāhula, whatever renunciants or brahmins purified their bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions in the past, did so by repeated reflection in this manner. Whatever renunciants or brahmins will purify their bodily, verbal and mental actions in the future, will do so by repeated reflection in this manner. Whatever renunciants or brahmins do purify their bodily, verbal, and mental actions at present, do so by repeated reflection in this manner. Therefore Rāhula, you should train thus: 'Reflecting repeatedly, I will purify my bodily, verbal and mental action.'

Ambalaṭṭhikā-rāhulovāda Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.415–420, trans. P.D.P.

Th.104 The golden rule of ethics in the Buddha's teaching

In the first passage, spoken to laypeople who ask for guidance on how to be successful in this life and happy in the next, the Buddha gives a version of the 'golden rule' of ethics: do not inflict on another being what you would not like done to oneself (cf. V.62). The second passage succinctly expresses this principle.

What, householders, is the method of righteous living having reference to oneself? Here, householders, a disciple of the noble one reflects, 'I really am one who desires to live, not desiring to die, desiring happiness, disliking unhappiness. If someone were to deprive me of life, I being one who desires to live, not desiring to die, desiring happiness, not desiring unhappiness, it would not be pleasing and dear to me. And if I were to deprive another person of his life, that other person being one who desires to live, not desiring to die, desiring happiness and disliking unhappiness, it would be not pleasing and dear to that other person. Whatever is not pleasing and not dear to me is also

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not pleasing and dear to the other as well. How could I inflict upon another what is not pleasing and dear to me?'

He, having taken this into account, himself abstains from destruction of life, encourages others to abstain from destruction of life, and speaks in praise of abstention from destruction of life. In this manner his bodily behaviour becomes pure in three aspects.

Again, householders, a disciple of the noble one reflects thus: 'If someone were to take from me what was not given and commit what is reckoned as stealing, it would not be pleasant and dear to me ... If someone were to misbehave with my wives[399] ... If someone were to hinder my benefit by false speech ... If someone were to break my friendships by divisive speech ... If someone were to use harsh speech against me ... If someone were to use idle chatter with me'

So he takes it into account and abstains from idle chatter, encourages others to abstain from idle chatter and speaks in praise of abstention from idle chatter. In this manner his verbal behaviour becomes pure in three aspects.

Veḷudvāreyya Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.353–355, trans. P.D.P.

All beings tremble at violence; life is dear to all. Comparing others with oneself, do not kill or cause another to kill.

Dhammapada 130, trans. P.H.

Generosity

The fruitfulness of giving *Th.105*

This passage emphasizes the benefit of any giving.

Monks, if people knew, as I know, the (karmic) fruits of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart. Even if it were their last bit, their last morsel of food, they would not enjoy its use without sharing it if there was some other being to share it with.

Dāna Sutta: Itivuttaka 18, trans. P.H.

Open-hearted giving *Th.106*

The noble disciple lives at home with a heart free of the taint of stinginess, he is open-handed, pure-handed, delighting in self-surrender, one to ask a favour of, one who delights in dispensing charitable gifts.

Patta-kamma Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.66, trans. P.H.

Now what kind of person, monks, is like a rainless cloud? Here, a certain person is not a giver to anyone; he does not give food, drink, clothing, vehicles, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, lodging, and lamps to renunciants and brahmins, to the poor, destitute, and needy. ... Now what, monks, is the kind of person who rains locally? Here, a certain person ... gives only to some renunciants and brahmins, to some of the poor, destitute, and needy, but not to others. ... Now what, monks, is the

399 Though monogamy is the norm in most Buddhist lands.

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kind of person who rains everywhere? Here, a certain person gives ... to all renunciants and brahmins, to the poor, destitute, and needy. ...

The person responsive to requests, who has sympathy for all beings, distributes things with delight and says 'give, give'.

Just as a cloud thunders, roars and rains, filling the plateau and plain, drenching with water, so is such an individual with regard to the wealth he has earned with effort.

Vuṭṭhi Sutta: Itivuttaka 64–66, trans. P.H. and P.D.P.

Th.107 The goodness of giving, especially to those who are virtuous

The first passage here says that even a small act of giving generates beneficial future karmic fruits, though giving to good people brings more benefits. The second passage amplifies this point. In giving to a good person, there is more confidence that the gift will be used well, so the giving will be done with less potential reservation. Moreover, to give with confidence in the goodness and good consequences of giving also enhances the ongoing impact on the giver, and giving to the virtuous helps forge a bond of association with them.

I tell you, Vaccha, even if a person throws the rinsings of a bowl or a cup into a village pool or pond, thinking, 'May the living beings here feed on this', that would be a source of karmic benefit, to say nothing of what is given to human beings. But I do say that what is given to a virtuous person is of great fruit, and not so much what is given to an unvirtuous person.

Vaccha Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.161, trans. P.H.

When a virtuous person, with a trusting heart, gives a righteously obtained gift to an unvirtuous person, having confidence that the (karmic) fruit of this action is great, this is an offering purified by the giver.

When an unvirtuous person, with an untrusting heart, gives an unrighteously obtained gift to a virtuous person, not having confidence that the fruit of this action is great, this is an offering purified by the receiver.

When an unvirtuous person, with an untrusting heart, gives an unethically obtained gift to an unvirtuous person, not having confidence that the fruit of this action is great, this is an offering not purified by either.

When a virtuous person, with a trusting heart, gives a righteously obtained gift to a virtuous person, having confidence that the fruit of this action is great, this is gift with an abundant fruit, I say.

Dakkhiṇā-vibhaṅga Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.257, trans. P.H.

Th.108 Teaching the Dhamma is the best form of giving

The gift of Dhamma surpasses every gift; the taste of the Dhamma surpasses every taste.

Delight in the Dhamma surpasses every delight. The destruction of craving overcomes everything painful.

Dhammapada 354, trans. P.H.

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Sharing karmic benefit *Th.109*

In Th.49, we saw that it is seen as good to 'offer alms on behalf of" dead parents. While generating beneficial karmic results through good actions is typically done directly by oneself, there is also the idea that under some circumstances one can share with another being the karmic benefit of an action, if they are aware of the action and rejoice at it. The Petavatthu *is a canonical text that has many instances of helping a dead relative who has been reborn as a hungry ghost to gain a better state. This is typically done by giving alms to a virtuous renunciant, and assigning the donation to a beneficiary as done on their behalf. The following verse is from a distressed ghost speaking to the man who had been her husband in her past life, and who wished to help her.*

What is given by your hand into my hand is of no benefit to me. But please satisfy with food and drink monks who are endowed with ethical discipline, free of attachment and learned and assign that donation to me – then I will be happy and richly endowed with all I desire.

Nanda-petavatthu: Petavatthu 23, trans. P.H.

The precepts of ethical discipline

The Three Refuges and five precepts *Th.110*

To be a Buddhist is to look to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha as refuges in life's troubles and as sources of inspiration. Most acts of devotion by lay Theravāda Buddhists include chanting, in Pāli, the refuge formula (see passage Th.93) and then a formula for taking the 'five precepts', which affirms the resolve 'I undertake the training-rule to abstain from ...' each of five unvirtuous actions. The resolves are to avoid: killing any living being; stealing or cheating; sexual misconduct such as adultery; lying; and taking substances that may lead to intoxication, or with the aim of intoxication. To break a precept requires deliberate intention.

'In what way, venerable sir, is one a lay follower?'

'When, Mahānāma, one has gone for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, in that way one is a lay follower'

'In what way, venerable sir, does a lay follower have ethical discipline?'

'When, Mahānāma, lay follower abstains from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, from wrong conduct in regard to sensual pleasures, from false speech, and from liquor, wine and intoxications that bring heedless behaviour, in that way a lay follower is virtuous.'

Mahānāma Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya IV.220, trans. P.H.

The ten courses of wholesome actions *Th.111*

This passage enumerates ten good actions: three of body, identical to the first three of the five precepts, and to the 'right action' factor of the noble eightfold path (see passage Th.99); four of speech, identical to the 'right speech' path-factor, and the first being identical to the fourth of the five precepts; and three of mind, the first two being close to the 'right resolve' path-factor, and the third being identical to the ordinary form of the 'right view' path-factor (see Th.100).

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There are, monks, successful actions of wholesome volition, with happy consequences, ripening in happiness: three of body, four of speech, and three of mind.

How is there a threefold successful bodily action of wholesome volition? There is a person who abstains from killing living beings; with the rod and weapon laid aside, he is conscientious and kind and compassionate towards all living beings. He does not take what is not given to him and does not appropriate with thievish intention the property of others, be it in the village or the forest. He gives up sensual misconduct and abstains from it. He does not have intercourse with those under the protection of father, mother... nor with those betrothed with a garland. ...

And how is there a fourfold successful verbal action of wholesome volition? There is a person who has given up false speech and abstains from it. When he is in the council of his community or in another assembly, or among his relatives, his guild, in the royal court, or has been summoned as a witness and is asked to tell what he knows, then, when he knows, he will say, 'I know'; and when he does not know he will say, 'I do not know'; when he has seen, he will say, 'I have seen'; and when he has not seen, he will say, 'I have not seen.' He will not utter any deliberate lie, be it for his own sake, for the sake of others or for some material advantage.

He has abandoned divisive speech and abstains from it. Having heard something from one group of people, he will not be one to tell it somewhere else, causing others to be in conflict with them; or having heard something from those others, he will not be one to tell it to the first group, causing them to be in conflict with the other people. Thus he is a uniter of those divided, a sustainer of those united, fond of harmony, delighting in harmony, rejoicing in harmony, he is one who utters speech which brings about harmony. He has abandoned harsh speech and abstains from it. His words are gentle, pleasant to the ear, affectionate, reaching to the heart, courteous, pleasing and attractive to the many. He has abandoned idle chatter[400] and abstains from it. He speaks at the right time, what is correct and to the point, of Dhamma and ethical discipline; he is one who utters speech to be treasured, timely, for a reason, measured, meaningful. ...

And how is there a threefold successful mental action of wholesome volition? Here a person is free from covetousness; he does not covet the wealth and property of others, thinking, 'Oh, that what he owns might belong to me!' He has no ill-will in his heart. He has pure mental resolve: 'May these beings be free from enmity, free from anxiety! May they be untroubled and live happily!' He has right view and an unperverted way of seeing: ... [The opposite of the wrong view in Th.56 is given] ...

As to these three bodily, four verbal and three mental successful actions of wholesome volition – it is due to them that with the dissolution of the body, after death, beings are reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world. ...

Sañcetanika Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya V.294–297, trans. P.H.

400 Chatter on topics such as listed at the start of L.47.

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Right livelihood, and extra precepts

Right livelihood *Th.112*

The first passage enumerates the commitment entailed in 'right livelihood', and the second describes how the Buddha practised this in many of his past lives.

Monks, these five kinds of trade should not be done by a devotee. What five? Trading in weapons,[401] trading in living beings, trading in flesh, trading in intoxicants and trading in poisons.

Vaṇijjā Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya III.208, trans. P.D.P.

Monks, in whatever former life ... the Tathāgata, then being human, having abandoned wrong livelihood, he was one who earned his living by right livelihood: he was one who abstained from crooked ways such as cheating with weights, false metal and measure, taking bribes, deceiving and fraud and from such acts of violence as maiming, beating, binding, mugging and looting. He, by the doing and by the accumulation of that karma, by the mass and the abundance of it was, at the dissolution of the body, reborn after death in a good destination, in a heavenly world.

Lakkhaṇa Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya III.176, trans. P.H.

Semi-monastic precepts for laypeople on special observance days *Th.113*

As well as the five precepts for laypeople, there is a set of eight precepts to be observed by the devout on four days of the lunar month. In this set, the usual third precept, against sexual misconduct, *is replaced by one on avoiding* any *sexual activity, then there are three additional precepts that all reduce sensory stimulation.*

I will tell you the duties of a householder, acting according to which one becomes a good disciple. A person with worldly possessions does not get a chance to experience the perfect conduct of the monk.

(1) Do not kill living beings, and do not get others to kill. Do not approve of the killing committed by others, leaving aside the (use of) the cudgel against all beings weak and strong.

(2) Avoid taking what is not given. May the disciple with understanding not take away and approve of taking away anything from anywhere, avoiding everything that is not given.

(3) Avoid the life contrary to celibacy, as the wise would avoid a pit of burning embers. Those not capable of the practice of celibate life, should not transgress with others' wives.

(4) Gone to an assembly, or to a gathering, do not lie to another. Do not make others tell lies and do not approve when others do so. Avoid all untruthfulness.

(5) Any householder who likes this teaching should not practise drinking of intoxicants. Knowing that it leads to madness, he should not make others drink nor approve of (their) drinking.

401 I.e. selling arms.

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Fools commit evil due to intoxication and make other people also who are negligent do so. One should avoid this sphere of detrimental karma. This is maddening, deluding, and delightful to fools.

Do not destroy life, take what is not given, tell lies, drink intoxicants. Abstain from life contrary to celibacy, from sexual relations. (6) Do not take a meal at the wrong time,[402] eating at the improper time.

(7) Do not wear garlands, do not use perfume, (8) one ought to sleep on a cover spread on the floor.

This is called the eight-factored sacred observance declared by the Buddha who had reached the termination of suffering.

With a pleased mind, one should take up this sacred comprehensive observance of eight precepts on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth days of the lunar fortnight and during the *pāṭihāriyapakkha.*[403]

Then on the following morning, the wise one who has observed the sacred observance, should offer in a suitable manner with a pleased mind food and drink to the community of monks.

Let him in a righteous way support mother and father, and let him engage in a righteous career, and the householder observing this will reach (rebirth with) the gods called the 'self-luminous'.

Dhammika Sutta: Sutta-nipāta 393–404, trans. P.D.P.

Loving kindness and patient acceptance

Th.114 The way to cultivate loving kindness and the value of its cultivation

This passage is the classic expression of the quality of mettā *- loving kindness, good-will, friendliness - and is often chanted, in Pāli, to cultivate this quality and generate an inner protective power (as a* paritta *chant: see heading above Th.95). Loving kindness is the first of states known as 'limitless qualities', the others being compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. Th.136, 137, M.113 and V.65–68 are on the meditative development of these.*

One who is skilled in welfare should act thus: Having understood that path of calmness he should be able, upright, perfectly upright, open to words (of guidance), gentle, not conceited, contented, easily supported, with few involvements, of light livelihood, of calmed senses, prudent, non-aggressive, not greedily attached to families (to gain alms).

He should not behave in the slightest manner that would expose him to the censure of others who are wise. (He should think:) May all beings, be happy and secure, and may they be well.

Whatever living beings there be, weak or strong, long or large, medium, short, minute or fat, seen or unseen, living far or near, those who have come to be or those seeking to be, may all beings be well.

Let not one deceive another, nor despise anyone anywhere. Let not one desire the unhappiness of another due to anger or feelings of aversion.

402 The monastic version of this rule (*Vinaya* IV.85–86) explains 'wrong time' as 'after noon has passed until sunrise'.

403 According to the religious traditions of India, a holiday period set apart for religious observance.

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Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, in the same way let one cultivate a limitless mind towards all beings.

Let one cultivate a mind of limitless loving kindness towards all beings – upwards, downwards, across without obstruction, free from hatred, free from enmity.

While standing, walking, being seated, or lying down, as long as one is awake, let one firmly maintain this mindfulness. It is called the highest living here.

Without entering into a dogma, ethically disciplined, endowed with insight, having removed greed for sensual pleasures, he will never again come to lying in a womb.[404]

Mettā Sutta: Sutta-nipāta 143–152, trans. P.D.P.

Let go of hatred and anger *Th.115*

'He abused me, he struck me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' For those who brood like this, hatred is not stilled.

'He abused me, he struck me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' For those who don't brood like this, hatred is stilled.

In this world, hatred is never ended by hatred, but only by the opposite of hatred. This has always been so. ...

One who controls anger as it arises, as with a chariot going off-course, is a true charioteer. Other folk just hold the reins.

Dhammapada 3, 4, 5 and 222, trans. PH.

Patient acceptance and sustained good-will *Th.116*

Passage L.40 shows the Buddha patiently and adeptly dealing with the anger of a critic. This passage holds up a high ideal of non-anger and a kindly attitude even in the face of the greatest provocation. Of course to attain this level requires great inner change and inner strength.

When others address you, their speech may be timely or untimely ... true or untrue ... gentle or harsh ... connected with good or with harm ... spoken with a mind of loving kindness or with inner hate. Here, monks, you should train yourselves like this: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic to their welfare, with a mind of loving kindness, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading these people with a mind imbued with loving kindness and, beginning with them, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving kindness: abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hostility, free from ill-will.' That's how you should train yourselves. ...

Monks, even if bandits were to carve you up savagely, limb by limb, with a two-handled saw, he among you who lets his heart get angered even at that would not be acting on my teaching. Here, monks, you should train yourselves like this: 'Our minds will be unaffected ... free from ill-will.' That's how you should train yourselves.

Kakacūpama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.126–129, trans. P.H.

404 This may mean attaining either an *arahant*'s freedom from any rebirth, or a non-returner's freedom from rebirth in the sense-desire realm.

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Helping oneself and helping others

Th.117 Concern for one's own well-being and the well-being of others

These passages hold that while it is best to conduct oneself so as to serve the true welfare of both oneself and others, one who serves his own true welfare but not that of others is better than one who works for the welfare of others without having attended to his own inner welfare. This is because one needs to have got oneself into a more spiritually developed state before being able to effectively help others in this regard.

Monks, these four persons are to be seen in the world. What four? (1) A person practising for neither his own well-being nor another's; (2) a person practising for the well-being of others but not his own; (3) a person practising for his own well-being but not another's, and (4) the person practising for his own well-being, as well as that of others.

Monks, suppose there were a torch from a pyre, burning at both ends with the middle soiled with faeces, which would not serve as firewood either in the village or in the forest: I say that this person who is neither practising for his own well-being nor on that of another is comparable to that.

Here monks, out of these (first) two persons, whoever is practising for the well-being of others but not his own is better and of greater excellence ... Out of these (first) three persons, whoever is practising for his own well-being and not the well-being of others is better and of greater excellence ... Out of (all) four persons, whoever is practising for his own well-being and that of others is the highest, the greatest, the chief, the best and the noblest.

Chavālāta Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.95, trans. P.D.P.

Cunda, it is definitely not possible that he who is stuck in the mud will pull out another who is stuck in the mud. But Cunda, it is definitely possible that he who is not stuck in the mud will pull out another who is stuck in the mud. Cunda, it is definitely not possible that he, who is untamed, undisciplined, and with (defilements) unextinguished, will tame, discipline, and (help to) completely quench (the defilements of) another. But Cunda, it is definitely possible that he who is tamed, disciplined and appeased will tame, discipline and completely quench another.

Sallekha Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.45, trans. P.D.P.

Th.118 The interplay of caring for oneself and caring for others

This passage emphasizes that mindful cultivation, in oneself, of wholesome states of mind and action is an effective way of benefiting others, while kindly care for others (cf. L.53, caring for the sick) in turn benefits oneself. What one cannot do, though, is directly control others.

Once upon a time, monks, a bamboo acrobat, having erected a bamboo pole, addressed his assistant, Medakathālikā: 'Come, my dear Medakathālikā. Climb up the bamboo pole and stand on my shoulders.' 'Yes, teacher', the assistant answered the bamboo acrobat and, climbing the bamboo pole, stood on his shoulders.

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Then the bamboo acrobat said to his assistant, 'Now you take care of me, my dear Medakathālikā, and I'll take care of you. Thus, guarding one another, taking care of one another, we'll show off our skill, receive our reward, and come down safely from the bamboo pole.'

When he had said this, Medakathālikā said to him, 'That's not the way to do it, teacher. You take care of yourself, and I'll take care of myself, and thus with each of us guarding ourselves, taking care of ourselves, we'll show off our skill, receive our reward, and come down safely from the bamboo pole.'

What Medakathālikā, the assistant, said to the teacher was the right way in that case. Monks, the establishing of mindfulness is to be practised with the thought, 'I'll take care of myself.' The establishing of mindfulness is to be practised with the thought, 'I'll take care of others.' Monks, one who takes care of himself takes care of others, and one who takes care of others takes care of himself.

How, monks, is it that one who takes care of himself takes care of others? It is by training development and cultivation (of wholesome states). And how, monks, does one who takes care of others take care of himself? It is by patient acceptance, by harmlessness, by loving kindness and by compassion.

Sedaka Sutta: *Saṃyutta-nikāya* V.169, trans. P.D.P.

Caring for animals and the environment

Buddhist texts show a respect for non-human sentient beings and the natural environment that supports them and humans. The Buddha allowed monks and nuns to accept food containing animal flesh, but only if the animal had not been killed specifically to feed them: (L.56). Of other passages in this book: Th.30 has the idea that the weather and crop-growth can be affected by human moral failings; Th.32 holds that one of the duties of a good Buddhist ruler is giving protection to 'beasts and birds'; Th.143 has a liberated monk experiencing joy at the beauties of nature; and passage Th.198 shows how the early community recycled donated robes so as not to be wasteful.

Non-harming of other sentient beings *Th.119*

This verse is said to have been uttered by the Buddha when he found some children tormenting a snake with a stick.

Whoever, seeking his own happiness, injures with violence other beings who desire happiness, he experiences no happiness when he has passed away.

Dhammapada 131, trans. P.H.

Abandon animal sacrifice and treat animals kindly *Th.120*

In this passage, the Buddha is approached by the brahmin Kūṭadanta, who is planning to hold a huge sacrifice, supposedly to bring benefit to himself and his community, in which he planned to kill 700 bulls, 700 bullocks, 700 heifers, 700 goats and 700 rams. He goes to the Buddha and asks for advice for how best to conduct the sacrifice. In reply, the Buddha tells him a story of a past king who was going to conduct a bloody sacrifice, but was advised by his chaplain (the

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Buddha in a previous life) to first ensure his rebellious people were not poor (see Th.33). The king then performed a sacrifice, but in the non-violent way in which his chaplain advised.

'In that sacrifice, brahmin, no bulls were slain, goats, sheep, cocks or pigs were slain, nor were any kinds of living creatures put to death. No trees were cut down to be used as sacrificial posts, no grasses mown to strew around the sacrificial spot. And those who are called slaves or servants or workmen did not perform their tasks due to fear of blows or threats, weeping with tears upon their faces. Whoever chose to help, did so; whoever chose not to help, did not. What each chose to do, he did, what they chose not to do, that was left undone. With ghee, and oil, and butter, and milk, and honey, and sugar only was that sacrifice accomplished.'

... [The Buddha then explains, in response to Kūṭadanta's questioning, that better forms of 'sacrifice' are the various forms of Buddhist practice, starting with generosity to renunciants, right up to attaining awakening. Kūṭadanta then expresses faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and says:]

'May the venerable One accept me as a disciple, as one who, from this day forth, as long as life endures, has taken him as his guide. And I myself, O Gotama, will have the groups of 700 animals set free. To them I grant their life. Let them eat green grass and drink fresh water, and may cool breezes waft around them.'

Kuṭadanta Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.144–148, trans. P.H.

MAHĀYĀNA

The power of goodness

M.77 **Good overcomes evil**

This passage points to the power of goodness to overcome evil.

My good men, in this world-system called Earth there are ten wholesome practices which are not taken up by anyone in any other Buddha-fields. What are these ten practices? They are: to attract the poor by means of generosity; to attract those of bad conduct by means of ethical discipline; to attract the hostile by means of patient acceptance; to attract the lethargic by means of vigour; to attract those whose minds are distracted, by means of meditation; to attract the unwise by means of wisdom; to attract those who are born in the eight kinds of unfortunate circumstances[405] and teach them how to free themselves from them; to teach the Mahāyāna to those whose practice is limited in scope; to attract those who lack wholesome roots by means of wholesome roots; and to continually and uninterruptedly bring living beings to maturity by employing the four means of drawing together harmoniously.[406]

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.9, section 17, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

405 For preventing hearing and understanding the Dharma; see V.14.

406 Giving, endearing speech, helpful conduct, and working together equally towards a common goal.

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Generosity

The practice of generosity *M.78*

What is the Dharma-door of cultivating generosity? When you see that someone has come to you to beg, give them your own property. Give away whatever you have with no trace of meanness, and bring joy to the other person. When you see people who are in crisis, or who are being oppressed, employ skill in means to help them and rid them of their fear. If anyone comes to you and asks you for the Dharma, you should explain the Dharma to him yourself, in a suitable manner.

You should practise the cultivation of these three kinds of generosity in this way, with no desire for fame or benefit for yourself. You should not have any desire for worldly rewards either. Simply bear in mind the benefits of peace and happiness that your generosity will bring to both yourself and others, and dedicate your actions to unsurpassed, perfect awakening.

'Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna'/*Dasheng qixinlun* (trans. by Śikṣānanda), *Taishō* vol.32 text 1667 p. 590a26-b3, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Types of giving *M.79*

Son of good family, there are three types of giving. The first is giving the gift of Dharma. The second is giving the gift of fearlessness. The third is giving property. Giving the gift of Dharma means teaching others ... If a bodhisattva sees that a living being is afraid of kings, lions, tigers, wolves, floods, or fire, he rescues them from these things. This is giving the gift of fearlessness. ... There are four hindrances to giving. The first is a miserly attitude. The second is not practising generosity. The third is not regarding it as worthwhile to give small gifts. The fourth is looking for worldly rewards. ...

Son of good family, there are three kinds of giver: inferior, average and superior. An inferior giver is someone who does not have faith that actions bear fruit, who is deeply attached to his miserly attitude. He worries that his possessions may run out, and becomes angry when he sees beggars approaching. An average giver is someone who has faith that actions bear fruit, but who still has a miserly attitude. He worries that his possessions may run out, but nonetheless decides to give his possessions away when he sees beggars approaching. A superior giver is someone who has faith that actions bear fruit, and who is not miserly with his possessions. He understands that his possessions are impermanent, and when he sees someone approaching him to beg, he is happy if he has something to give. If he has nothing to give, he will be disappointed, and he gives away even his most precious possessions. ...

Son of good family, a sage practises generosity for his own sake and for the benefit of others. He understands that all possessions, all precious things, are impermanent. He gives because he wants to fill the minds of living beings with joy. He gives out of compassion, in order to overcome miserliness, without expecting reward

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in the future.[407] He gives because he wants to honour the path to awakening.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.19, pp.1054c02–08, 1054c14–16, 1055a13-19, 1055b3-6, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Precepts of ethical discipline

M.80 Act ethically, but do not be attached to ethical discipline, or judge others

As one's keeping of ethical precepts and other people's breaking of them are 'empty' of independent existence, avoid attachment and judgementalism about them.

Moreover Śāriputra, when a bodhisattva cultivates the perfection of ethical discipline, ... he should not rely on his pure ethical discipline, or be attached to it. He should not be offended by bad conduct, although he does not act unethically himself. Both abiding by the precepts and breaking the precepts are essentially empty. This, Śāriputra, is why it is said that all bodhisattvas are clad in the great virtuous armour of perfect wisdom whilst they cultivate the perfection of ethical discipline.

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol.5, text 220, p.269b13–22, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.81 The five precepts

The Buddha said to the householder Ugra, 'A householder bodhisattva should act with ethical discipline, in accordance with the five precepts. He should delight in non-violence, abandoning the use of swords and sticks, and, with regret for what one has done in the past, taking a firm vow not to kill any living being, not to become angry with any living being, and to always cultivate compassion equally for all.

He should not take what is not given, being content with his own property, and not longing for others' possessions. He should eliminate greed and not allow delusion to arise, never feeling jealous of others' property or income. He should not take even a blade of grass that has not been given to him.

He should abstain from adultery, and be satisfied with his own wife. He should not desire the wives of others, or gaze longingly at beautiful women of others. In his mind, he recoils from suffering, and his thoughts often turn to renunciation. (When attuned to renunciation,) if he sees that desire for his own wife arises, he should cultivate an aversion to what is unlovely,[408] knowing that this is a powerful form of bondage. He should reflect, 'I must not act out of desire'. He should always cultivate an awareness of impermanence, of what is painful, of the non-existence of an essential self, and of impurity. He should reflect, 'I shall not indulge in desirous thoughts, and certainly not in mutual physical contact.'

407 The beneficial karmic fruits of actions are not 'rewards' but natural results. The best giver is not concerned with any everyday 'rewards' of giving, but nor do they give *in order to* get beneficial karmic fruits.

408 That is, the unattractive innards of any person's body.

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He should avoid false speech. What he does should be in harmony with what he says. He should not deceive others. He should do what he has planned to do, in a wholesome state of mind. He should speak truthfully when he talks about what he has heard or seen, abiding by the truth. He should give up his life rather than tell a lie.

He should abstain from drinking alcohol. He should not be intoxicated or disorderly. He should not speak rashly or behave impetuously. He should not ridicule others or wrestle with them. He should remain mindful, with clear awareness. If he wants to give up all his wealth and property, he should give food to those who need food, and drink to those who need drink. When he gives to others, he should reflect, 'I will give them anything they want. I will satisfy the desires of those who beg.' If giving someone alcohol will lead him to become composed and mindful, without deceit, he will give him alcohol. Why would he do this? This is the perfection of giving, satisfying the desires of others. This, householder, is why the Buddhas do not criticise a bodhisattva who gives alcohol to others.

Ugra-paripṛcchā: Taishō vol.11, text 310, p.473c05–25, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The refuges and the precepts *M.82*

The wise recognise that there are two kinds of ethical discipline. The first is worldly convention, the other is ultimate ethical discipline. Conventional ethical discipline is taking the precepts without having gone for refuge to the Three Jewels. This kind of ethical discipline is not stable, like dye that has not been fixed. Because of this, I go for refuge to the Three Jewels before taking the precepts.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.22, p.1063c19-c22, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Keeping precepts removes fear from other beings *M.83*

Son of good family, giving the gift of fearlessness is the most important kind of giving. That is why I say that the five great sacrifices are the five precepts that alleviate living beings' fear.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.22, p.1064a16–18, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

On suicide *M.84*

This passage points out that in the context of belief in karma and rebirth, suicide in the face of present difficulties is a very unwise move. It also makes clear that any form of self-torture is no way to bring an end to life's pains.

Some say that if one takes one's own life by throwing oneself into an abyss or a fire, or starving oneself, this will bring freedom from pain. These things cause pain, so how can they be the end of pain? All living beings do things that are wholesome and things that are unwholesome, and experience the results of these actions.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.20, p.1062b05–08, trans. D.S.

On meat eating *M.85*

This passage presents the Buddha as having forbidden all meat eating by his followers, unlike earlier texts which allowed it to some extent (see L.56).

There are countless reasons, Mahāmati, why it is not appropriate

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for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat any kind of meat. I will explain them to you. In this world, Mahāmati, in the long course of saṃsāra, there is no living being who has not had some kind of family relationship to you, either as your mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. These beings are reborn in another state of existence, born from a womb as a wild animal, as livestock, or as a bird, or they are born as someone with whom you have a family relationship. How, then, can it be appropriate for a bodhisattva, a great being, to eat meat, when he wants to relate to all living beings as if they were part of himself, and wants to practise the Buddha-Dharma? ... Therefore, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for any living beings anywhere in the cycle of rebirths who have any notion of family relationships to eat any kind of meat. This is so that they might cultivate a perception of all living beings as being as precious to them as their only child. It is not appropriate for a compassionate bodhisattva to eat meat. Even in exceptional circumstances, Mahāmati, it is not appropriate for a bodhisattva who is engaged in spiritual practice to eat any kind of meat. ...

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, ch.8, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.86 A *bodhisattva* precept on meat eating

This is one of the forty-eight secondary precepts of the East Asian Brahmā's Net Sūtra *code.*

If a son of the Buddha deliberately eats all meat that he is forbidden to eat, he destroys the seed of the great mind of compassion, and he will be shunned by all living beings. This is why all bodhisattvas must refrain from eating the flesh of a living being. A bodhisattva who eats meat commits countless offences. A bodhisattva who intentionally eats meat disgraces himself by committing a secondary offence.

'Brahmā's Net *Sūtra*'/ *Fan wang jing, Taishō* vol.24, text 1484, p.1005b10–b13, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.87 The qualities of right speech

Moreover, Śāriputra, what is right speech for a bodhisattva, a great being? Śāriputra, the bodhisattva's speech is speech which does not cause distress to himself or others, and which does not involve him in quarrels between living beings.

Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Assembly 12, ch. 14, Taisho vol. 11, text 310, p.312a19-21, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

There are two kinds of people who live in accordance with the Dharma: those who possess the eight kinds of understanding, and those who do not. The eight kinds of understanding are: understanding the Dharma, understanding the goal, understanding time, understanding contentment, understanding oneself and others, understanding living beings, understanding the faculties, and understanding what is inferior and what is superior. The speech of those who possess these eight kinds of understanding has sixteen qualities. It is timely, clear, coherent, harmonious, meaningful, pleasant, and agreeable. It is not contemptuous, nor is it critical of what others say. It accords with the Dharma, and brings benefit to oneself and others. It does not wander off

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the point, but is concise, truthful, and unconceited. It is free from any expectation of worldly rewards.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.10, p.1043 b20–29, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Right livelihood, and extra precepts

Right livelihood *M.88*

Son of good family, there are five kinds of occupation which someone who observes the precepts of a householder should not engage in. He should not sell living beings; he should not sell weapons; he should not sell poison; he should not sell alcohol; and he should not press sesame seeds for oil.[409] ... Son of good family, there are three more things which someone who observes the precepts of a householder should not do. He should not make nets or traps; he should not dye silk; and he should not tan leather.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.14, p.1048c02–08, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

10. A son of the Buddha should not horde swords, sticks, bows, or arrows, or do business with people who cheat others using false scales or measurements. He should not abuse a position of authority to appropriate others' property, nor restrict and sabotage others' success out of jealousy. Neither should he raise cats, foxes, pigs, or dogs. A bodhisattva who does so disgraces himself by committing a secondary offence.

Bodhisattvas, great beings, Śāriputra, ... should not make their living by means of flattery, lies, or fraud. They should not be demanding, or pressure others. They should be easy to satisfy, easy to support, and observe the rules of training conscientiously. They should not become arrogant, or jealous of others' gains and profit. They should be content with what they have. They should not abuse the tolerance of the noble ones, but always guard their own purity of conduct. This, Śāriputra, is the right livelihood of bodhisattvas, great beings.

Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Taishō vol.11, text 310, p.312a29–b06, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The eight precepts *M.89*

This passage concerns the practice of the eight semi-monastic precepts discussed in Th.113. They are observed from dawn one day to dawn the next.

The Buddha said to Śrīgāla: 'Son of good family, if someone who has gone for refuge to the Three Jewels wishes to observe the eight precepts, ... they should be taken from someone who is completely pure and not simply before an image of the Buddha. Once the precepts have been taken, they should be observed with purity, with purified awareness and purified mindfulness, with the aim of obtaining purified karmic fruit.'

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.21, p.1063a27–b2, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

409 Perhaps because this may also kill small creatures among the seeds.

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Helping oneself and helping others

M.90 Benefitting self and others

The Buddha said to the householder's son Śrīgāla, 'Son of good family, a bodhisattva who possesses faith, and who has already brought benefit to himself, then brings benefit to others. Bringing benefit to oneself is not really benefitting oneself. It is when one brings benefit to others that that one is really benefitting oneself. Why is this? It is because a bodhisattva, a great being, will happily give up his body, his life and his wealth for the benefit of others, but doing so also brings benefit to himself. ... To benefit others is to benefit oneself. ... A bodhisattva who abandons others to distress and suffering, and lives in blissful comfort himself, cannot benefit others. If he does not cultivate the virtues of generosity, ethical discipline, and great learning in himself, but only instructs others to do so, this is what is known as benefitting others, but not oneself.'

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.10, p.1043a05-15, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.91 Purifying one's ethical discipline by looking after others

Sujāta said to the Buddha, 'If someone has taken up the precepts, how can he purify his ethical discipline?' The Buddha said: 'Son of good family, he can purify his ethical discipline ... in four ways. The first is with a mind filled with loving kindness. The second is with a mind filled with compassion. The third is with a mind free from greed. The fourth is to help those whom no-one else has helped. ... There are three more ways to purify one's ethical discipline. The first is to abandon one's own concerns, and to deal with those of others. The second is to deal with others' concerns whenever they arise. The third is to not worry that this might cause difficulties for oneself.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.15, p.1050c16–18, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.92 Caring for the community, human and non-human

Son of good family, a wise man who wishes to attain awakening, who is wealthy, and who has also studied medicine, will set up medical facilities to tend to the sick and supply them with food and medicine. If there is a bumpy, narrow road, he will level and widen it, removing thorns, splinters, rocks, excrement and other dirt.[410] If people need help in dangerous places, he will supply planks or ladders, and climbing ropes. Alongside roads in the wilderness, he will have wells dug, groves of fruit trees planted, and brooks and ponds dredged. ... If he sees an animal which is running in fear, without hesitation he will save it, give it shelter, and persuade the hunter to leave it in peace, either by persuading him with words of kindness or by paying him. If he sees

410 Cf. Th.6 *jātaka* story.

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a traveller wandering into a dangerous place, he will immediately lead him through the danger ... If he sees people suffering because they have lost their possessions, or because their parents have died, he will give them money, comfort them with kind words, and encourage them by teaching them the Dharma, explaining the effects of virtues and of the defilements.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.19, p.1060c21–1061a05, 1061a23-26, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

A *bodhisattva* precept on caring for the sick *M.93*

This is one of the forty-eight secondary precepts of the East Asian Brahmā's Net Sūtra *code.*

If a son of the Buddha sees anyone who is sick, he should attend to them in exactly the same way as if they were the Buddha. Of the eight fields of beneficial karma, attending to the sick is the most important. If his parents, his teacher, or a member of the Sangha becomes sick, their faculties impaired, and suffering in a hundred different ways, he should attend to them until they recover. If, instead, out of ill-will and resentment, he does not go to help the sick, whether they are in the monasteries of the Sangha, in cities, in the wilderness, in forests, or on the road, but leaves them helpless, he disgraces himself by committing a secondary offence.

'Brahmā's Net *Sūtra'/Fan wang jing, Taishō* vol.24, text 1484, p. 1005c8–c13, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Help others to help themselves *M.94*

This passage says that a bodhisattva, *choosing to stay in the rounds of rebirth to compassionately help others, should not bind himself by believing that he can ultimately help living beings directly. Instead, he should focus on enabling them to rid themselves of their defilements.*

The bodhisattva should cultivate the kind of great compassion which does not fall into the view that it is possible to benefit living beings, but which is focused on ridding living beings of their non-intrinsic defilements. Why should he do this? The kind of compassion which falls into the view that it is possible to benefit living beings will exhaust the bodhisattva in his rebirths. The kind of compassion which avoids the arising of the view that it is possible to benefit living beings will not exhaust the bodhisattva in his rebirths. He is reborn in this way, and not with such views having arisen. Being reborn with a mind free of the arising of such views is like liberation. His birth is like liberation. When he is reborn in this way which is like liberation, born in this way which is like liberation, he has the strength and the power to teach living beings who are in bondage the Dharma which will liberate them from their bonds.

As the Blessed One has said, 'One who is in bondage himself cannot liberate others from their bonds. This is not possible. One who is liberated from bondage, however, can liberate others from their bonds. This is possible.'[411] A bodhisattva, therefore, should be liberated, not in bondage.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.4, section 15, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

411 Cf. Th.117.

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Teaching others

M.95 A *bodhisattva* as inexhaustible in giving Dharma-teachings

This passage shows the ever-giving nature of the bodhisattva.

Vimalakīrti said, 'Sisters, there is an entrance into the Dharma which is called "The Inexhaustible Lamp", and this is where you should enter. What is this entrance into the Dharma? It is like this, sisters. From a single oil-lamp, a hundred thousand others can be lit without diminishing the original lamp. In the same way, a single bodhisattva can establish many hundreds of thousands of others in awakening without the mindfulness of that original bodhisattva weakening or decreasing. In fact, it will grow stronger. Indeed, any wholesome practice grows stronger in oneself when one explains it and teaches it to others.

This is the entrance into the Dharma which is called "The Inexhaustible Lamp". When you are living in the realm of Māra, you should illuminate the awakening-mind for innumerable nymphs and sons of the gods. In this way, you will demonstrate your gratitude to the Tathāgata, and all living beings will be able to depend on you.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.3, section 66, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Care for animals and the environment

M.96 Caring for all sentient beings

Sons of the Buddha, when the bodhisattva was born as a king, and could dictate the law as he wished, he issued a decree to prohibit the taking of life. Killing was prohibited in every town and village in the realm. All species of living beings – those with no legs, those with two legs, those with four legs, and those with many legs – were all free from fear, and no-one thought of harming them. He cultivated all the many forms of conduct of a bodhisattva, and treated animals with kindness, not harming them in any way. He cultivated the wondrous awakening-mind, in order to bring comfort to living beings.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, p.149b16–21, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

These are some of the forty-eight secondary precepts of the East Asian Brahmā's Net Sūtra *code (see M.108).*

14. If a son of the Buddha, with an unwholesome mind, intentionally sets fire to forests or wilderness between the fourth and the ninth month of lunar year,[412] or if he intentionally sets fire to others' houses, buildings, towns, cities, monasteries of the Sangha, trees in fields inhabited by yakṣas, or the property of others which he does not have permission to set fire to, he disgraces himself by committing a secondary offence. ...

20. If a son of the Buddha, with a mind filled with compassion, releases animals from captivity,[413] he should reflect, 'All men are my fa-

412 When it might bring greatest harm to animals.
413 Cf. M.92 on saving animals from hunters.

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thers. All women are my mothers. From one life to the next, I have never been born without a parent. All living beings in the six realms have been my parents at one time.[414] If I kill and eat a living being, I will be killing one of my parents, who are the reason I have a body. Earth and water are my primordial body. Fire and wind are my original form.' This is why, in every existence, releasing animals from captivity is his unchanging spiritual practice. He also teaches others to release animals from captivity. When he sees someone killing an animal, he will try to find a way to rescue them, to save them from suffering. He will instruct the killer, and explain to him the bodhisattva precepts on rescuing living beings.

'Brahmā's Net *Sūtra*'/*Fan wang jing, Taishō* vol.24, text 1484, p.1006a6–7, b9–18, p.1007b11-13, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Loving kindness and compassion

Loving kindness *M.97*

Loving kindness is the enemy of hatred, and of not showing kindness to living beings. Loving kindness is to cultivate joy when one has a common purpose with others, such as eating together. It is the desire, the wish, the craving, the longing for others' happiness. It is an affection unsullied by the desire for sensual pleasure, or the expectation of receiving something in return. This is what 'loving kindness' means.

Śikṣā-samuccaya of Śāntideva, ch.12, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The power of compassion *M.98*

A householder should first cultivate compassion. If he does not, he will not be able to practise the precepts of a householder. If he cultivates compassion first, then he will be able to practise them. A renunciant can only fully practise five of the perfections: he cannot fully practise the perfection of generosity. Only a householder can fully practise the perfection of generosity. Why is this? It is because he can give anything at any time. A householder, therefore, should first cultivate compassion. Once he has cultivated compassion, he can perfect his ethical discipline, patient acceptance, vigour, meditative concentration, and wisdom. If he cultivates a compassionate mind, he will be able to give what is difficult to give, patiently accept what is difficult to patiently accept, and do what is difficult to do. This is why compassion is the root of all wholesome qualities. Son of good family, if someone is able to cultivate a compassionate mind in this way, he will be able to remove the effects of previous evil actions which were as great as Mount Sumeru, and he will soon attain unsurpassed perfect awakening. Even the smallest wholesome actions which he performs will yield (karmic) fruit as great as Mount Sumeru."

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.3, p.1036c12–20, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

414 That is, as I have had countless past lives, so all current beings have, in some past life, been my mother or father.

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M.99 The *bodhisattva*'s selfless, compassionate movement through the world

This passage describes how the bodhisattva *moves through the world, unattached to it, compassionately helping others.*

69. It is wonderful how the son of the Victorious Ones, who has discerned the unchanging nature of phenomena, manifests himself as an ignorant, blind being, subject to birth, and so forth.

70. In his skill in means and his compassion for others, he is bound to the world. Although he has attained the sphere of the noble ones, he manifests in the sphere of immature beings.

71. He has gone beyond the whole world, and yet he does not abandon the world. He acts in the world for the benefit of the world; worldly affairs do not stick to him.

72. Just as water does not stick to a lotus, even though it grows in the water, worldly things do not stick to him, even though he is born in the world.

73. His mind is constantly blazing into action like a fire, yet he never abandons his practice of calm and meditative concentration.

74. Because of the power of his previous practice, and because he has abandoned conceptualization, he no longer has to exercise effort in order to bring living beings to maturity.

75. He knows who is to be trained, how they are to be trained, and with what means, whether by his teaching, his physical appearance, his conduct or his practice.

76. Always effortlessly unobstructed in his wisdom, he acts in the world for the benefit of living beings, limitless as space.

77. When he has reached this state, the bodhisattva is like a Tathāgata, in that he rescues living beings in the world.

78. Yet the difference between a bodhisattva and a Buddha is like the difference between an atom and the Earth, or between a cow's hoofprint and the ocean.

Ratnagotra-vibhāga of Sāramati or Maitreya, ch.1, v. 69–78, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The *bodhisattva* perfections

*The six perfections (*pāramitā*) of the* bodhisattva *are qualities that are to be developed to a high degree, in order that he or she can develop compassion and move closer to Buddhahood. They are: generosity (*dāna*), ethical discipline (*śīla*), patient acceptance or forbearance (*kṣānti*), vigour or energy (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).*

M.100 Developing the perfections for the sake of others

A bodhisattva, a great being, who trains himself in these six perfections always bears this in mind: 'Living beings in the world, their minds distorted, are drowning in the ocean of saṃsāra, with no way to escape. If I do not cultivate skill in means and excellent conduct, I will not be able to rescue them from the suffering of saṃsāra. I should therefore make an effort to cultivate skill in means and excellent conduct in order to help those living beings, and cultivate the perfections – from

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the perfection of generosity to the perfection of wisdom – in order to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening, and rescue living beings from the great suffering of saṃsāra.'

Bearing this in mind, a bodhisattva, a great being gives up all of his mental and physical possessions for the benefit of living beings. When he has given up all of his possessions in this way, he bears this in mind: 'In reality, I do not have anything to give up. Why is this? It is because those mental and physical possessions are empty by their nature,[415] and they cannot really be given up. They do not actually belong to me.' A bodhisattva who meditates in this way will quickly perfect his practice of the perfection of generosity, and in due course will attain unsurpassed perfect awakening.

A bodhisattva, a great being, in order to liberate living beings from the suffering of saṃsāra, will never compromise his ethical discipline. Why is this? It is because a bodhisattva, a great being, always bears this in mind: 'In order to liberate living beings from the suffering of saṃsāra, and to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening, I must not take the life of any living being, or perform any of the other ten unwholesome kinds of action, up to not holding any wrong views. I must not pursue sensual pleasure either, longing for the pleasures of heaven, or wishing to become a god such as Indra, Māra, or Brahmā. I must not aim to become a disciple or a solitary-buddha either, as they only make an effort to liberate themselves.' A bodhisattva who meditates in this way will quickly perfect his practice of the perfection of ethical discipline, and in due course will attain unsurpassed perfect awakening.

A bodhisattva, a great being, in order to liberate living beings from the suffering of saṃsāra, will not give in to angry thoughts. Even if he is constantly insulted, slandered, tortured, and rebuked, suffering intense pain, he will never allow even the slightest hateful thought to arise in his mind. Even if he is beaten with a stick, or hit with rocks, even if his body is chopped into pieces and his limbs are torn apart, even then he will never allow even the slightest unwholesome thought to arise in his mind. Why is this? It is because a bodhisattva, a great being, perceives every sound as being like an echo in a valley, and he perceives every form as being like a mass of froth. Because of this, there is no reason for him to allow anger to arise, and undermine his wholesome qualities. A bodhisattva who meditates in this way will quickly perfect his practice of the perfection of patient acceptance, and in due course will attain unsurpassed perfect awakening.

A bodhisattva, a great being, in order to liberate living beings from the suffering of saṃsāra, will put great energy into acquiring every excellent good quality, until he attains unsurpassed perfect awakening. Until he has done so, he will never indulge in laziness. Why is this? It is because a bodhisattva, a great being, always bears this in mind: 'If I am lazy, I will not be able to rescue all living beings from the great suffering of saṃsāra, and also I will not be able to attain omniscience.' A bodhisattva who meditates in this way will quickly perfect his prac-

415 That is, they are empty of inherent, independent existence and inherent nature.

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tice of the perfection of vigour, and in due course will attain unsurpassed perfect awakening.

A bodhisattva, a great being, in order to liberate living beings from the suffering of saṃsāra, practises the excellent forms of meditation. Until he attains unsurpassed perfect awakening, he will never allow his mind to become distorted by greed, hatred and delusion. Why is this? It is because a bodhisattva, a great being, always bears this in mind: 'If I allow my mind to become distorted by greed, hatred and delusion, I will not be able to do anything to benefit others, and I will not be able to attain Buddhahood.' A bodhisattva who meditates in this way will quickly perfect his practice of the perfection of meditation, and in due course will attain unsurpassed perfect awakening.

A bodhisattva, a great being, in order to liberate living beings from the suffering of saṃsāra, is never parted from the perfection of wisdom. Until he attains unsurpassed perfect awakening, he will make a constant effort to cultivate sublime and excellent worldly and transcendental knowledge. Why is this? It is because a bodhisattva, a great being, always bears this in mind: 'If I were parted from the perfection of wisdom, I would not be able to help living beings to fully develop, and I would not be able to attain omniscience.' A bodhisattva who meditates in this way will quickly perfect his practice of the perfection of wisdom, and in due course will attain unsurpassed perfect awakening.

This is why, Subhūti, although all phenomena in reality have no substantial nature or function, but are by nature empty, the bodhisattvas, great beings, make a vigorous effort to cultivate the six perfections which lead to the attainment of unsurpassed perfect awakening, without resting for a moment.

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol.7, text 220, p. 323a21-c13, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.101 The six perfections functioning together

This passage shows how the six perfections can function together even in the most difficult circumstances.

The Venerable Subhūti again spoke to the Blessed One. 'Blessed One, how can a bodhisattva, a great being, dwell in the perfection of generosity, in order to practise the perfection of patient acceptance?' The Blessed One said, 'Subhūti, when a bodhisattva, a great being, practises generosity with a mind free from grasping and free from meanness, he shares the karmic benefit he acquires from that practice of generosity equally with all living beings, dedicating it to the attainment of unsurpassed perfect awakening. Even if a bodhisattva is slandered, injured, or insulted by others for no reason, his state of mind is not affected. He bears them no ill-will, and has no wish to harm them. Instead, he treats them with friendliness, loving kindness, and compassion. This, Subhūti, is how a bodhisattva, a great being, can dwell in the perfection of generosity, in order to practise the perfection of patient acceptance.'

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol. 6, text 220, p. 791c14–17, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

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The perfection of patient acceptance I *M.102*

Even if people treat him in horrible, vicious ways he never allows any angry thoughts to arise, and never repays evil with evil. If someone comes to him to apologise, he immediately accepts their apology. The sight of living beings always delights him. When he sees them acting in unwholesome ways, he has compassion for them. He praises patient acceptance, criticises hatred, and explains that hatred has harmful effects.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.18, p.1052c, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The perfection of patient acceptance II *M.103*

This passage praises the Buddha's patient acceptance in a past life when he was once hacked to pieces. It says that this was possible as he lacked any idea of an essential 'self' that was being attacked,[416] *and urges a deep non-attachment to everything.*

The Tathāgata's perfection of patient acceptance, Subhūti, is not really a perfection. Why is this? It is because, Subhūti, when an evil king cut the flesh from every part of my body, I did not perceive an essential self, a living being, a life force, or a person. Indeed, I had no perception or non-perception at all. Why is this? It is because, Subhūti, if I had perceived an essential self at that time, I would also have perceived hostility. If I had perceived a living being, if I had perceived a life force, or if I had perceived a person at that time, I would also have perceived hostility. Why is this? With my higher knowledge, Subhūti, I know that I have lived five hundred times as the sage Kṣantivādin.[417] During those lives, I did not perceive an essential self, I did not perceive a living being, I did not perceive a life force, and I did not perceive a person.

Therefore Subhūti, a bodhisattva, a great being, should avoid any perception,[418] and cultivate a mind set on unsurpassed, perfect awakening. He should cultivate a mind which is not based on form, a mind which is not based on sounds, smells, tastes, physical objects or mental objects. He should not cultivate a mind which is based on phenomena, nor on the absence of phenomena. He should cultivate a mind which is not based on anything. Why is this? It is because whatever the mind is based on is not really a basis.[419] This is why the Tathāgata has said that a bodhisattva should give a gift without basing himself on anything.

Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, section 14, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The perfection of vigour *M.104*

The importance of vigilance, and how best to relate to tasks.

Son of good family, there are four kinds of seed of awakening. The first is to not be attached to possessions. The second is to not be concerned about one's own body and one's own life. The third is the cultivation of patient acceptance. The fourth is compassion for living

416 See heading above Th.170 and cf. Th.210.

417 This name means 'he who teaches patient acceptance'.

418 i.e. any labelling perception

419 I.e. one should have open equanimity that does not fix on any sensory or mental object, but knows all as insubstantial phenomena.

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beings. There are five ways to cultivate these seeds. The first is to have no sense of oneself as inferior, never thinking 'It is impossible for me to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening'. The second is to be able to tolerate physical suffering. The third is to make great effort without interruption. The fourth is to save living beings from immeasurable suffering. The fifth is to always praise the wonderful qualities of the Three Jewels. A wise person who cultivates awakening always trains himself in these five ways. There are six more practices. These are the six perfections, from the perfection of generosity to the perfection of wisdom. There is one thing which allows one to make progress in these six perfections, and this is vigilance. A bodhisattva who is not vigilant will not be able to make progress in these five ways of cultivating the seeds of awakening. If he is vigilant, he will be able to make progress in them.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.4, p.1037c5-16, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Someone who is not lazy does not enjoy sitting and lying around. He does not take pleasure in this. He sees the powerful virtue of carrying out both important and incidental tasks, and regards any task he undertakes as worth being taken to successful completion. When he works, he is not concerned about whether he is hungry or thirsty, cold or hot, on time or behind time. He does not have a negative view of his own abilities. He does not get upset if a major task is left unfinished. When he successfully completes a task, he is pleased by his own abilities, and praises the results of the energetic efforts he has made. ... He does not leave a task unfinished halfway through.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.18, p.1053a1–9, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.105 The perfections as generating a Buddha-field

This passage explains that the practice of the perfections both creates a better world here and now and leads to an even better Buddha-field in which the bodhisattva *will dwell when he attains Buddhahood, and which will be an ideal realm for other beings to be reborn into.*

The Blessed One said, 'Son of good family, the Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is a field of living beings. Why is this? It is because a bodhisattva obtains a Buddha-field to the extent that he helps living beings. A bodhisattva obtains a Buddha-field as living beings develop discipline. A bodhisattva obtains a Buddha-field as living beings enter into Buddha-knowledge through entering his Buddha-field. A bodhisattva obtains a Buddha-field as living beings cultivate noble spiritual faculties through entering his Buddha-field. Why is this? Son of good family, it is because the Buddha-fields of bodhisattvas are created for the sake of living beings.

Ratnākara, even if one wants to measure space, space cannot be measured or adorned. In the same way, Ratnākara, a bodhisattva understands that all phenomena are just like space, and even if he wanted to measure his Buddha-field in order to bring living beings to maturity, a Buddha-field is like space, and cannot be measured or adorned.

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What's more, Ratnākara, the Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is a field of good intentions, and when he attains awakening, living beings who are sincere and honest are born in his Buddha-field. ...

The Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is a field of generosity, and when he attains awakening, living beings who have given everything up gather in his Buddha-field. The Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is a field of ethical discipline, and when he attains awakening, living beings who have perfected their motivations, and who guard their practice of the ten wholesome kinds of action, gather in his Buddha-field. The Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is a field of patient acceptance, and when he attains awakening, living beings who are adorned with the thirty-two bodily characteristics of a Buddha, and who have attained perfection in patient acceptance, moral self-discipline, and meditative calm, gather in his Buddha-field. The Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is a field of vigour, and when he attains awakening, living beings who have undertaken the vigorous pursuit of everything which is wholesome gather in his Buddha-field. The Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is a field of meditation, and when he attains awakening, living beings who have fully developed mindfulness and awareness gather in his Buddha-field. The Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is a field of wisdom, and when he attains awakening, living beings who are firmly established in perfection gather in his Buddha-field. The Buddha-field of a bodhisattva is the four limitless states, and when he attains awakening, living beings who dwell in loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity gather in his Buddha-field. ...

So, son of good family, the good intentions of a bodhisattva are as strong as his determination to attain awakening. His practice is as strong as his good intentions. His determination is as strong as his practice. His profound meditative understanding is as strong as his determination. His good conduct is as strong as his profound meditative understanding. His development is as strong as his good conduct. His skill in means is as strong as his development. The purity of his Buddha-field is as strong as his skill in means. The living beings in his Buddha-field will be as pure as the Buddha-field itself. Their knowledge will be as pure as those living beings themselves. The teachings they receive will be as pure as their knowledge allows for. The good conduct that is based on their knowledge will be as pure as the teachings they receive. Their minds will be as pure as the good conduct that is based on their knowledge.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.1, sections 12–14, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The true *bodhisattva* *M.106*

This passage outlines the wondrous wisdom and heroic and adaptable compassion of the true bodhisattva.

The perfection of wisdom, my friend, is the mother of the bodhisattvas. Skill in means is their father. The Guides are born from these two.

Their wife is the pleasures of the Dharma, and loving kindness and compassion are their daughters. Truth and Dharma are their sons, and their home is contemplation of the meaning of emptiness. ...

They are victorious heroes who have destroyed their enemies, the

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defilements. They have dared to attack the four Māras,[420] and planted their banners on the seat of awakening.

They appear to choose to be born, but they are not born, they do not come into existence.[421] They appear in all Buddha-fields like rising suns.

Having worshipped countless Buddhas, Guides, with all kinds of offerings. They do not take themselves or the Buddhas as a foundation.[422]

They purify all Buddha-fields, just as they purify the actions of living beings. They have attained the field of space and have no concept of living beings.[423]

The skilful bodhisattvas can, in an instant, manifest the forms, sounds, and speech of living beings.

They are awake to the actions of the Māras and imitate their actions. With perfect skill in means, they manifest all of their deeds.

They make themselves appear to be old, ill, or dead. They live creating illusions to bring living beings to maturity.

They manifest the burning of the Earth when the world is consumed by fire at the end of an eon. They demonstrate impermanence to living beings who think in terms of permanence. ...

In the shorter eons afflicted by disease,[424] they become the best of medicines, by which living beings are liberated and become happy and healthy.

In the shorter eons afflicted by famine, they become food and drink. They teach the Dharma to living beings who have been relieved of their hunger and thirst.

In the shorter eons afflicted by the use of swords, they meditate on loving kindness, and instruct countless living beings in non-violence.

In the midst of great battles they favour neither side. Greatly powerful bodhisattvas delight in bringing people together in harmony.

In order to help living beings, they descend with full awareness into the hells which are inconceivable to those in a Buddha-field.

They reveal themselves amongst all kinds of animals. Because they teach the Dharma everywhere, they are called the Guides.

They manifest the gratification of sensual desire and the meditation of the meditators. They confound the Māras and give them no way in.

Just as the illusion of a lotus in the midst of fire can be shown to not really exist, they show that both sensual desire and meditation do not really exist.[425]

With full awareness, they become prostitutes in order to draw men to them. They use lust to hook them, and when they have enticed them, they establish them in the understanding of a Buddha.

They always become village headmen, caravan-leaders, priests, prime ministers, or ministers in order to help living beings.

They become inexhaustible treasures for living beings who are in

420 See Glossary.

421 As they know that the realm of birth and death is ultimately no different from unborn deathless nirvana.

422 Perhaps meaning a foundation for grasping.

423 I.e. no concept of living beings as independent essences.

424 On the short eons afflicted by disease, famine or swords, cf. the end of Th.32, on a period of extreme decline in society before people come to see the error of their ways.

425 As substantial entities.

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poverty. Having given them gifts, they cause the awakening-mind to arise in them.

For living beings who are full of arrogant pride, they become great champions and set them on the path of supreme awakening in which all pride is destroyed.

They always remain in the presence of living beings who are tormented by fear. Having given them the gift of fearlessness, they bring them to the maturity of awakening.

They become celibate sages who possess the five kinds of higher knowledge, and spur living beings on in their ethical discipline and in holding fast to the joys of patient acceptance.

The Leaders regard living beings as spiritual teachers worthy of service. They become their slaves, their servants, and enter into their discipleship.

They use whatever means they have at their disposal that living beings might delight in the Dharma. They have great mastery of skill in means, and manifest all kinds of actions

Their skill is limitless, and their sphere of activity is limitless. They possess limitless understanding, and liberate a limitless number of living beings.

It would not be easy even for the Buddhas to express all of their good qualities, even over the course of countless eons, of countless hundreds of eons.

What intelligent person, having heard this incomparable Dharma would not set out to attain awakening? Only inferior beings who have no concept of wisdom.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.7, section 6, verses 1–2, 12–19, 24–42, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Bodhisattva vows and precepts

The vows of the *bodhisattva* Samantabhadra *M.107*

This passage focusses particularly on the vow to serve all living beings.

What are these ten great vows? The first is to worship all the Buddhas. The second is to praise the names of the Tathāgatas. The third is to make abundant offerings. The fourth is to confess all actions performed in the past that hold one back. The fifth is to rejoice in other's virtues. The sixth is to request that the wheel of the Dharma be set in motion. The seventh is to request that the Buddhas remain in the world. The eighth is to always follow the Buddhas' teaching. The ninth is to always serve living beings. The tenth is to dedicate all good, pure actions to all living beings. ...

Moreover, son of good family, the vow to constantly serve living beings can be explained in this way. In the realm of phenomena, throughout the ten directions of space, there are many different kinds of living beings. ... I will be a good doctor for all those who are suffering from illness. I will show the right path to those who have lost their way. I will bring blazing light to those in the dark of the night. I will lead the poor to discover hidden wealth. A bodhisattva brings abundant benefits to all living beings equally in this way.

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Why is this? If a bodhisattva serves living beings in any way he can, then he makes offerings to all the Buddhas. If he worships and honours them, then he also worships and honours the Tathāgatas. If he bring happiness to living beings, then he bring happiness to all the Tathāgatas.

Why is this? It is because all Buddhas, all Tathāgatas, take the mind of great compassion as their body. For the sake of living beings, they cultivate great compassion. Out of this great compassion arises the awakening-mind. On the basis of this awakening-mind, they attain perfect awakening.

It is like a great tree, a king of trees, growing in the wilderness, in the sands of a desert. If its roots find water, its branches, leaves, and glorious fruit will flourish. The Bodhi-tree,[426] the king of trees, growing in the wilderness of birth and death is like this. All living beings are its roots. All the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are its glorious fruits. By helping living beings by nourishing them with the water of great compassion, one can attain the glorious fruit which is the perfection of wisdom of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Why is this? If all bodhisattvas help living beings by nourishing them with the water of great compassion, they will be able to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening. Awakening is thus dependent on living beings. If there were no living beings, no bodhisattva could attain unsurpassed perfect awakening.

You should understand things in this way, son of good family. Great compassion can be fully developed when one views all living beings with an impartial mind. With a mind of great compassion, one is able to serve all living beings, and thereby makes offerings to the Tathāgatas. This is how a bodhisattva should serve living beings.

Even when the realm of space is exhausted, when the realm of living beings is exhausted, when the effects of the previous actions of living beings are exhausted, when the defilements of living beings are exhausted, my service will not be exhausted. I will think of them continuously, without interruption. I will not grow weary in body, speech, mind, or activity. ...

At that time, the bodhisattva, the great being Samantabhadra, in order to emphasize the meaning of what he had said, addressed these words to the ten directions of space.

Pure in body, speech, and mind, I bow to all the lions amongst men of the three times,[427] throughout all worlds in the ten directions of space, omitting none.

Through the great power of the vows of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, I appear before all the Tathāgatas.

By manifesting as many bodies as these are atoms in the world, I bow to as many Buddhas as there are atoms in the world.

In every atom, there are as many Buddhas as there are atoms in the world, each surrounded by a host of bodhisattvas.

Every atom in the endless expanse of phenomena is, I firmly believe, completely permeated by all the Buddhas. ...

426 A term for the kind of tree under which the Buddha attained awakening (*bodhi*); here it is referred to in a symbolic sense.

427 Past, present, and future.

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I will work unceasingly for the benefit of all beings in the ten directions of space, for as many eons as there are atoms in the world, bringing an end to all of the evil paths of suffering, and bringing happiness to all beings.

I will always serve all living beings. In all the eons to come, I will follow the conduct of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, and attain unsurpassed, great awakening.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 293, pp.844b24–29, 845c24–25, 846a07–28, 846c29– 847a07, 847b13–16, ch.40, trans. D.S.

The Brahmā's Net Sūtra code of *bodhisattva* precepts *M.108*

This passage gives a set of ten primary and forty-eight secondary precepts for bodhisattvas. *It was developed in China, and used by monastics as a supplement to their monastic precepts, and also by some pious laypeople. This was also the case in Korea, though in Japan it came to replace the monastic code.*

The Ten Major Precepts[428]

The Buddha said to the sons of the Buddhas: 'There are ten major bodhisattva precepts. Someone who has received the bodhisattva precepts, and fails to recite these precepts is not a bodhisattva, and he does not possess the seed of Buddhahood. I recite these precepts. All past bodhisattvas have studied them. All future bodhisattvas will study them. All present bodhisattvas study them. The bodhisattva precepts have been taught in this way. This should be studied and observed wholeheartedly.'

1. Taking life

The Buddha said, 'A son of the Buddha does not kill, encourage others to kill, provide others with the means to kill, praise killing, have sympathy for killing, use his supernormal powers to kill, create the causes or conditions for killing, provide ways of killing, or engage in business which involves killing. He is prohibited from intentionally killing any living being whatsoever. A bodhisattva should act in order to permanently establish a mind filled with loving kindness and compassion, a mind filled with respect for his parents, and always be looking for ways to rescue all living beings. A bodhisattva who takes pleasure in killing commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.[429]

2. Taking what is not given

A son of the Buddha does not steal, encourage others to steal, provide others with the means to steal, create the causes or conditions for stealing, provide ways of stealing, or engage in business which involves stealing. He does not conjure up yakṣas or spirits to steal others' property for him. He is prohibited from stealing anything whatsoever

428 These equate to the first five of the eight precepts (Th.113) – except that the fifth here concerns selling intoxicants rather than taking them (this is a lesser offence) – plus the four aspects of right speech, and generosity.

429 'Defeat' in the monastic life, leading to the necessity to leave the monastic order (see V.84, and heading above Th.193). Breaking any of the ten major precepts listed here is said to be this kind of offence.

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which is owned by someone else, even something as insignificant as a needle or a blade of a grass. A bodhisattva should act in order to cultivate a mind filled with compassion, the nature of a Buddha, and to always help all people to accumulate karmic benefit and happiness. A bodhisattva who steals the property of others commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

3. Engaging in sexual intercourse[430]

A son of the Buddha does not have sex or encourage others to do so. He is prohibited from having sex with any female being whatsoever, from creating the causes or conditions for sex, or providing ways of having sex, to engaging in business which involves sex. He may not have sex with female animals, female gods, yakṣas, or spirits; nor may he engage in any other improper form of sexual activity. A bodhisattva should act in order to cultivate a mind filled with respect for his parents and to save all living beings. He should teach people the pure Dharma. How could he abandon compassion and encourage people to have sex with animals, or even with their mothers, their sisters, or their relations? A bodhisattva who does so commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

4. False speech

A son of the Buddha does not speak falsely, encourage others to speak falsely, provide others with the means to speak falsely, create the causes or conditions for false speech, provide ways of speaking falsely, or engage in business which involves false speech. He does not say that he has seen something that he has not seen, and he does not say that he has not seen something that he has seen. He does not speak falsely in mind or body. A bodhisattva should always act in order to develop right speech and right view and encourage all living beings to do the same. How could he encourage living beings to speak falsely, to hold wrong views, or to engage in wrong conduct? A bodhisattva who does so commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

5. Dealing in alcohol

A son of the Buddha does not deal in alcohol, encourage others to deal in alcohol, create the causes or conditions for dealing in alcohol, provide ways of dealing in alcohol, or engage in business which involves dealing in alcohol. He is prohibited from dealing in any kind of alcohol. This is because alcohol provides the causes and conditions for unwholesome actions. A bodhisattva should act in order to help all living beings develop the wisdom of clear insight. How could he encourage living beings to distort their minds? A bodhisattva who does so commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

6. Discussing the faults of others

A son of the Buddha does not discuss the faults of renunciant bodhisattvas, household bodhisattvas, monks, or nuns. He does not encourage others to discuss their faults, create the causes or conditions for discussing faults, provide ways of discussing faults, or engage in business which involves discussing faults. If a bodhisattva hears non-Buddhists or wicked followers of the path of the disciple or the path of

430 The wording of this precept shows that it is for monks and nuns and any others who observe celibacy. Others should avoid sexual misconduct.

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the solitary-buddha denouncing what they suppose to be to undharmic or unlawful in the Buddha-Dharma, he should always develop a mind filled with compassion, and instruct those wicked people in such a way that they develop faith in the Mahāyāna. How could he then discuss the supposed faults of the Buddha-Dharma? A bodhisattva who does so commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

7. Praising oneself and criticising others

A son of the Buddha does not praise himself and criticise others, encourage others to praise themselves and criticise others, create the causes or conditions for praising oneself and criticising others, provide ways of praising oneself and criticising others, or engage in business which involves praising oneself and criticising others. A bodhisattva should take the place of all living beings in enduring their humiliation, taking responsibility for the unwholesome actions of others, and giving others the credit for his own wholesome actions. A bodhisattva who displays his own virtue and conceal other's merits to the extent that others might be criticised commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

8. Meanness

A son of the Buddha is not mean, nor does he encourage others to be mean, create the causes or conditions for meanness, provide ways of being mean, or engage in business which involves meanness. A bodhisattva should act in order to provide all poor people who come to him to beg with everything they ask for. How could he refuse to give anything at all, even a penny, a needle, or a blade of grass? How could he fail to teach the Dharma to those who seek it, even a sentence, a verse, a tiny speck of the Dharma, but instead insult them and abuse them? A bodhisattva who does so commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

9. Becoming angry and using violence

A son of the Buddha does not become angry, nor does he encourage others to become angry, create the causes or conditions for anger, provide ways of becoming angry, or engage in business which involves becoming angry. A bodhisattva should act in order to create peace, harmony, and wholesome roots among people. He should always cultivate a mind filled with compassion. How could he, whether he is surrounded by living beings or not, insult others with abusive words or resort to violence, using his hands or a weapon? If he does act in this way, how could he refuse to apologise for his behaviour when the offended party asks him to? A bodhisattva who does so commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

10. Maligning the Three Jewels

A son of the Buddha does not malign the Three Jewels, nor does he encourage others to malign them, create the causes or conditions for them to be maligned, provide ways of maligning them, or engage in business which involves maligning them. A bodhisattva should feel like he is being struck by a hundred spears if he hears non-Buddhists or wicked people say a single defamatory word about the Buddha.[431]

431 A more relaxed attitude is expressed in Th.16.

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How could he malign the Three Jewels himself, cultivating a mind without faith or respect for his parents? A bodhisattva, who maligns the Three Jewels along with wicked people with wrong views, commits an offence of such gravity that he is defeated.

Conclusion

You should all study this thoroughly. These are the ten major bodhisattva precepts which you should study. You should not transgress a single one of them in even the smallest degree, let alone all of them. ...

The Forty-Eight Secondary Precepts

Now that I have explained the ten major precepts, I will explain the forty-eight secondary precepts, namely the precepts against: 1. failing to honour teachers and friends; 2. drinking alcohol; 3. eating meat; 4. eating the five kinds of pungent food;[432] 5. not encouraging people to confess their unwholesome actions; 6. not giving offerings or requesting the Dharma; 7. not going to hear the Dharma; 8. turning one's back on the Mahāyāna and taking up the Hīnayāna; 9. failing to treat the sick; 10. possessing weapons for killing living beings; 11. serving as an emissary for a country; 12. engaging in the business of selling; 13. speaking ill of others; 14. starting wildfires; 15. teaching the Dharma in a distorted way; 16. misrepresenting things for one's own gain; 17. using one's position to acquire more for oneself; 18. teaching things one doesn't understand; 19. speaking with a forked tongue; 20. failing to rescue living beings; 21. taking angry and violent revenge; 22. failing to request the Dharma out of arrogance and pride; 23. distorting the truth out of arrogance and pride; 24. failing to practise and study the teaching of the Buddha; 25. teaching without understanding the needs of one's listeners; 26. hoarding things for oneself; 27. accepting special treatment from the laity; 28. giving special treatment to individual members of the Sangha; 29. wrong livelihood; 30. failing to observe the full and new moon days;[433] 31. failing to save and release living beings; 32. harming living beings; 33. unwholesome entertainment; 34. thinking of following the Hīnayāna, even for a short time; 35. failing to wish for what one needs to practise the bodhisattva path; 36. failing to take vows; 37. risking difficult journeys; 38. sitting in improper sequence at gatherings;[434] 39. failing to cultivate beneficial karma and wisdom; 40. failing to confer the precepts on all, without bias; 41. teaching for one's own gain; 42. conferring the precepts on evil people; 43. receiving gifts without a sense of humility; 44. failing to honour the sūtras; 45. failing to train living beings; 46. teaching the Dharma in an improper way; 47. making rules which conflict with the Dharma; 48. destroying the Dharma.

'Brahmā's Net *Sūtra*'/*Fan wang jing*, *Taishō* vol.24, text 1484, p.1004b11-5a24, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

432 Garlic, three different kinds of onion, and leeks.

433 I.e the special observances that take place on these days.

434 The respectful sequence is by order of having taking the *bodhisattva* precepts, whether monastic or layperson. In the code of monastic discipline (*vinaya*), though, the sequence is by order of having taken the monastic vows.

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VAJRAYĀNA

Wholesome and unwholesome actions

The ten wholesome actions *V.41*

This passage is a simple listing of the ten courses of wholesome actions as taught by the Buddha (see passage Th.111), in the form of the avoidance of certain unwholesome deeds and the practice of their positive antidotes.

The ten wholesome actions consist of abstaining from the ten unwholesome actions and putting their positive antidotes into practice. The first wholesome action of the body is to abstain from killing and to protect beings' lives instead. The second wholesome action of the body is to abstain from taking what is not given and to practise generosity instead. The third wholesome action of the body is to abstain from sensual misconduct and to maintain ethical discipline instead.

The first wholesome action of speech is to abstain from lying and to tell the truth instead. The second wholesome action of speech is to abstain from divisive speech and to settle hostilities instead. The third wholesome action of speech is to abstain from using harsh language and to talk pleasantly instead. The fourth wholesome action of speech is to abstain from idle chatter to recite prayers instead.

The first wholesome action of the mind is to abstain from covetousness and to embrace generosity instead. The second wholesome action of the mind is to abstain from malevolence and to practise benevolence instead. The third wholesome action of the mind is to abstain from holding wrong views and to apply the correct view instead.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.186, trans. T.A.

The perfection of generosity

The passages below describe the three modes of practising the perfection of generosity: giving material things, giving Dharma, and protecting beings from danger.

Giving material things *V.42*

Giving material things can take three forms: (simple) generosity, great generosity, and extreme generosity.

Generosity means giving to others all kinds of material objects starting with a cup of tea or a pot of barley. As long as you give something away with a pure intention, its quantity does not matter.

In general, if people gain possession even of just a small property and wealth they clutch at it until their last breath, and so it cannot serve for their benefit either in this lifetime or in the future. No matter how much they have, they think they have nothing and loudly proclaim to be starving to death. They already seem to have become hungry ghosts as a causally concordant result of their actions.

Avoiding such attitudes, you should endeavour to practise generosity by making offerings to the Three Jewels, giving to the lowly and the poor, and so forth. As Milarepa said, 'Deny food to yourself and give

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to the needy.' Otherwise, if you succumb to desire, though you may have all the wealth in the world you will never be satisfied. You will not be able to renounce what you have and will always believe that you need to obtain even more (riches) before being able to make any offerings or give any alms.

The Dharma practice of giving material things and other kinds of wealth was taught by the Buddha chiefly for householder bodhisattvas. Monastics should merely train in reducing their desires and being content with whatever they have. What is most important for them is to practise the three higher trainings (of ethical discipline, meditative concentration, and wisdom) with great determination – even among difficult conditions of mountain hermitages and other solitary places.

Some people go against their spiritual practice and amass material possessions through cheating in trade, or from farming,[435] or other unwholesome activities and then they make a boast of practising the Dharma through making offerings (to the Three Jewels) and giving alms to the poor. However, even the Dharma can lead to a bad destiny if it is not practised according to the Dharma. That kind of generosity is absolutely useless. The most important thing therefore is to always remain content with whatever one has.

Great generosity means giving up to others something that is very rare and precious to oneself, such as a horse, an elephant, a son, or a daughter.

Extreme generosity refers to sacrificing one's own body, life, limbs, and so forth. It is like Prince Great Courage giving his body to a tigress, Ācārya Nāgārjuna giving his head to the Sātavāhana Prince, or Princess Mandhabhadrī giving her body to a tigress, for example.[436] This, however, cannot be practised by ordinary beings, only by those who have attained the bodhisattva stages (where one no longer has many ordinary human limitations). Presently we can (only) mentally dedicate our body, life, and all possessions to the benefit of sentient beings without attachment, and pray that we may be capable of actually giving them away in the future.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.381–84, trans. T.A.

V.43 Giving Dharma

Giving Dharma means to do all kinds of things to help others on the spiritual path – such as giving empowerments, Dharma-explanations, text-transmissions, and so forth. However, until one's own desires (for such things as material gain and respect) are completely extinguished, though one may pretend to be working for the benefit of others, it is a mere mock show. ...

435 Which inevitably involves killing beings, including worms and insects.

436 These three examples of extreme generosity are well-known from Mahāyāna literature. Prince Great Courage was a previous incarnation of the Buddha, who fed his own body to a tigress on the verge of starvation (*Jātaka-māla*, story no.1; *Suvarṇa-bhāsottama Sūtra*, ch.18). Nāgārjuna is said to have sacrificed his own head at the request of the young Sātavāhana prince who was eager to become king upon the death of his father, whose life-force was connected to that of Nāgārjuna.

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It is really quite difficult to give the gift of Dharma to sentient beings. Teaching the Dharma to others without gaining some personal experience (of its truth) is not going to help others at all. Collecting offerings and wealth by teaching the Dharma is what the Indian *Dampa*[437] has called 'turning the Dharma into merchandise to acquire riches.' So as long as your own desires are not exhausted, you should not haste to work for others' benefit. Pray instead that whenever benevolent gods and spirits overhear your reciting Dharma texts and prayers or reading the words of the Buddha, their minds may be liberated. After performing water-offering or the (symbolic) offering of the body, recite the well-known verse 'Abandon all evil, perform only wholesome actions, tame your own mind; that is the teaching of the Buddhas' (*Dhammapada* 183), and rest content with that much giving of Dharma.

When your own desires are finally exhausted, then will it be time to devote yourself mainly to helping others without falling under the power of pleasure-seeking or indolence for an instant. So that is how you should proceed.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.384–87, trans. T.A.

Giving protection from danger to humans and animals *V.44*

Giving protection or freedom from danger refers to such activities as giving protection to beings who are unprotected, giving shelter to those who are without any shelter, or offering support to those without any support. Specifically, since The Blessed One has said that of all conditioned wholesome deeds, protecting sentient beings' lives is the most beneficial, you should most assiduously try to rescue beings in all kinds of practical ways, such as prohibiting hunting and fishing whenever you have the power to do so, ransoming sheep on the way to the slaughterhouse, saving lives of fish and insects that are going to be killed, and so forth.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', p.387, trans. T.A.

The perfection of ethical discipline

The passages below describe the three modes of practising the perfection of ethical discipline: refraining from evil, gathering wholesome qualities, and bringing benefit to sentient beings.

Refraining from evil *V.45*

The discipline of refraining from evil means avoiding like poison all the ten unwholesome actions of body, speech, and mind, which do not serve the benefit of others.[438]

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.387–88, trans. T.A.

437 The great Indian *siddha* Padampa Sangye, who visited Tibet several times in the eleventh to twelfth centuries and established tantric practising lineages there.

438 The ten unwholesome actions are the opposites of the ten wholesome actions listed in V.41 and Th.111.

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V.46 Gathering wholesome qualities

The discipline of gathering wholesome qualities refers to creating all the kinds of wholesome roots[439] that it is possible to create, whenever possible, ranging from the tiniest ones. Even according to the common saying of mundane people, 'wholesome actions and evils are created all the time through our mouths, through our hands, even as we walk, even as we sit.' That is why, unless we take care to avoid (evil actions) and adopt (wholesome attitudes) by mindfully and attentively examining ourselves all the time in whatever we do,[440] we may commit very serious unwholesome actions even while we are just having fun. As it is said, 'Do not underestimate even the slightest evil believing it can do no harm; even a tiny spark of fire can set alight a mountain of hay' (cf. *Dhammapada* 71).

On the other hand, if we get used to applying mindfulness and alertness all the time in whatever we do, then we may create even an inconceivable mass of wholesome (qualities) while going about our everyday business. Even such a small act as taking off your hat to pay respect to a pile of *maṇi* stones[441] on the road and keeping it on your right side while passing round it, when performed in the framework of the three excellent modes,[442] can lead you straight on to perfect awakening. As it is said, 'Do not underestimate even the slightest wholesome action, thinking it can bring no benefit; water-drops assembling can gradually fill up a large vessel' (cf. *Dhammapada* 122, Th.72). Remember the story of a pig that once upon a time was chased around a stūpa by a dog, or the one about seven caterpillars who once fell into the water upon a tree leaf and were carried around a stūpa in the water, circumambulating it seven times, which caused them eventually to attain liberation. Therefore, at all times and in all circumstances avoid even the tiniest evil and create even the tiniest wholesome root you can create, and then offer the karmic benefit to all sentient beings. This includes all the bodhisattva vows and precepts.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.388–89, trans. T.A.

V.47 Bringing benefit to sentient beings

The discipline of bringing benefit to sentient beings means actually working for the benefit of sentient beings through relying on the four ways of attracting disciples[443] – once one has completely exhausted one's desires as mentioned earlier.[444] While one is a beginner, it is done by offering the karmic benefit of one's training and practice of creating

439 See Th.102.

440 Cf. Th.103.

441 A heap of small stone tablets with the letters of the mantra *Oṃ maṇi padme huṃ* (the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, the *bodhisattva* of compassion) painted or carved on them, a common sight in Tibet.

442 The three excellent modes of any wholesome practice are: arousing the awakening-mind as preparation, doing the main part without any preconception, and dedicating the karmic benefit to sentient beings as conclusion.

443 These are: giving what is needed, endearing speech, helpful conduct, and impartiality (cf.Th.229).

444 See V.43.

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wholesome (roots) and avoiding evil, done in the framework of the three excellent modes,[445] for the benefit of all sentient beings.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', p.389, trans. T.A.

The discipline of bringing benefit to sentient beings consists of eleven things, which are listed in the 'Stages of the Bodhisattva' as follows: 'Participating in meaningful activities, dispelling the pain of suffering sentient beings, teaching knowledge to those who do not know the method, appreciating and returning help received, protecting others from danger, eliminating the misery of those who are in pain, providing necessities to those who do not have them, attracting a circle of Dharma-friends and engaging them in accordance with their mentalities, arousing delight through authentic good qualities, properly eliminating and frightening off (enemies of the Dharma) through supernormal powers, and creating inspiration.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', p.220, trans. T.A.

The discipline of restraint *V.48*

This passage described the types and reasons for taking the vow of individual liberation which is the basis of taking the bodhisattva *vow.*

The discipline of restraint has common and uncommon variants. The common one is (any of) the seven types of (vows for) individual liberation. As said in the 'Stages of the Bodhisattva': 'The bodhisattva's discipline of restraint is the vow of individual liberation that a person has taken. There are seven types: the discipline of the monk, nun, nun-in-training, male novice, female novice, layman, and laywoman. One should know how they fall into lay and monastic/renunciant categories.'[446]

Those vows keep one away from harming others and its basis (i.e. anger). Someone taking the vow of individual liberation turns away from it for their own sake, while a bodhisattva turns away from it for others' sakes. As the 'Sūtra Requested by Nārāyaṇā'says, '(The bodhisattva) does not maintain discipline for the sake of political power, nor for the sake of higher rebirth, nor for the sake of Indra, nor for the sake of Brahmā, nor for the sake of enjoyments, nor for the sake of Śīva,[447] nor for any object of the senses. Likewise, he does not maintain discipline through fear of rebirth in hell, in the animal kingdom, or in the netherworld. Rather, he maintains discipline in order to assume the style of a Buddha; he maintains discipline because he seeks the benefit and ease of all sentient beings.'

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.214–15, trans. T.A.

445 Explained in a footnote to V.46.

446 The layman's and laywoman's vows fall into the category of lay discipline, while the rest into that of the monastic discipline.

447 Indra, Brahmā and Śiva are all worldly deities.

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The perfection of patient acceptance

The following passages from the fourteenth chapter of Gampopa's 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation' discuss the perfection of patience: the patient acceptance of difficult and painful situations, and of challenging teachings.

V.49 Why we need patience

This passage is a meditation on the disadvantages of not having patience and the advantages of having it.

One may be generous and ethically disciplined, but still one can easily get angry if one does not have patience. If one gets angry, then all one's wholesome (roots) created through generosity, ethical discipline, and other means can at once come to naught.[448] As is taught in the 'Collection on Bodhisattvas', 'Anger can destroy your wholesome roots amassed through one-hundred-thousand eons.' Also, in 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening', 'One deed of anger can defeat all your good actions of generosity, offerings made to the Tathāgatas, and so forth, that you have been collecting for thousands of eons' (BCA VI.1).

Moreover, unless you have patience you can be beset by hatred, causing such a sharp pain to arise in your heart as if it was pierced by a poisonous arrow, so that you will no longer have any joy or peace of mind – you will not even be able to sleep. As 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening' says, 'Gripped by the painful feeling of hatred, one's mind cannot have any peace at all. Unable to get any joy or happiness, one cannot fall asleep nor find any stability.' (BCA VI.3). And again, 'In brief, nobody can live peacefully with anger in their hearts' (BCA VI.5b).

Moreover, if you do not have patience, every time you get angry you will put on a wrathful appearance, making your husband or wife and all your companions feel depressed and annoyed. They will not come near you even if you give them food and gifts. As is said, 'Your loved ones will be disheartened. They may be attracted by what you give them, but they will not trust you' (BCA VI.5a).

Moreover, if you do not have patience, Māra will find the opportunity to give you trouble. As taught again in the 'Collection on Bodhisattvas', 'Whoever is overcome by anger will give Māra a chance to cause him trouble.' Moreover, if you do not have patience, the six perfections of the path to Buddhahood will be incomplete and you will be unable to attain unsurpassed awakening. As taught in the 'Noble Collection', 'How could one become enlightened if one is angry and impatient?'

On the other hand, if you have patience, it is supreme among all wholesome roots. As is said, 'There is no evil like hatred, and no austerity like patience. Therefore, one should make efforts to practise patience in every way' (cf. *Dhammapada* 184). Moreover, if you have patience, you will even obtain all kinds of temporary (worldly) pleasures. As is said, 'Whoever defeats anger by meditative absorption will

448 For instance, if one kills someone out of anger.

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be happy in this life and hereafter.' Again, if you have patience, you will reach unsurpassed awakening. As the 'Meeting of Father and Son Sūtra' says, 'If you always meditate on loving kindness, thinking "anger is not the way to awakening", that is how you will attain awakening.'

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.227–29, trans. T.A.

What is patience *V.50*

This passage gives a short definition of patience and lists its three types, which are then discussed in the three passages that follow.

Patience with something is defined as not being concerned by it. As taught in the 'Stages of the Bodhisattva', 'In brief, the patience of a bodhisattva is defined as an undisturbed (state of) mind and a lack of concern about anything but compassion.'

There are three types of patience: patience in the sense of being unconcerned about those doing you harm; patience in the sense of undertaking the painful; and patience in the sense of understanding the Dharma. The first one is arrived at through examining the nature of the sentient beings who are doing the harm; the second through analysing the nature of pain, and the third through investigating the actual nature of phenomena. The first two types of patience are practised from the relative point of view, while the third is from the ultimate point of view.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.229–30, trans. T.A.

Being unconcerned about those doing one harm *V.51*

Besides describing the nature of the first type of patience, this passage introduces a method of cultivating patience towards sentient beings that are perceived as harm-doers.

The first type of patience means tolerating those who do to one or one's belongings such disagreeable things as beating, criticizing, insulting, or exposing one's hidden flaws; or those who create obstacles to (the fulfilment of) one's desires. And what does it mean to tolerate them? It means not being upset by them, not retaliating, and not holding any resentment. ...

[Meditative cultivation of patience]

The 'Stages of the Bodhisattva' teaches that patience should be cultivated by forming five conceptions. They are, as the text puts it, 'Conception of the harm-doer as dear to one's heart, the conception of there being only phenomena, the conception of impermanence, the conception of suffering, and the conception of taking responsibility.'

Conception of the harm-doer as dear to one's heart: You should think, 'This being who is now doing me harm must have been my mother, father, sister, brother, or teacher in a previous life. He must have helped me before in innumerable ways, so I must not retaliate for their doing me this harm. Thus be patient with the harm-doer by conceiving of him as someone dear to your heart.

The conception of there being only phenomena: You should think, 'This harm-doer depends on conditions; there is just conception, there are only phenomena. There is not anyone – not any (inherently existent) sentient being, any living being, any soul here who is beating, criticiz-

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ing, insulting me, or who is exposing my hidden flaws.' Try to develop patience by thinking in this way.

The conception of impermanence: You should think, 'Sentient beings are impermanent, subject to death. The worst damage that can happen is losing one's life, and since everybody is going to die anyway, no-one's life should be taken. Try to develop patience by thinking in this way.

The conception of suffering: You should think, 'All sentient beings suffer from three kinds of suffering.[449] I should try to dispel these rather than causing them suffering.' Try to develop patience towards the harm-doer by conceiving of him as someone who is suffering.

The conception of taking responsibility: Since I have aroused the awakening-mind, I should be working for the benefit of all sentient beings. I have taken responsibility for all sentient beings as (taking responsibility) for a wife. Having taken responsibility for them in that way, it is inappropriate to retaliate for such a small insult.' Try to develop patience by thinking in this way.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.230, 233–35, trans. T.A.

V.52 The patience of undertaking the painful

The next type of patience is enduring the difficulties of the Buddhist path, which is said to be a heroic endeavour.

The patience of undertaking the painful means to never get upset with the pains involved in (the path for) accomplishing unsurpassed awakening but to undertake them with a joyful heart. According to the 'Stages of the Bodhisattva', there are eight types of painful things to be undertaken – such as those related to places, and so forth. In actual fact, they are as follows. Having renounced the world, (one must undertake) the pains of seeking Dharma robes, alms, and so forth. Then there are the pains coming from the effort needed to make offerings to, attend, and honour the Three Jewels and spiritual masters, to listen to the Dharma, to receive explanations, to recite prayers, to meditate, and to practise yoga without sleeping in the first and last watches of the night; as well as the pains coming from the effort needed to perform the earlier-mentioned eleven things to benefit sentient beings.[450] All those painful things are to be undertaken without concern about hardship, fatigue, feeling hot or cold, hunger or thirst, or any kind of mental disturbance. It is like undertaking the painful treatment of bloodletting in order to recover from a severe disease. Or, as taught in 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening': 'The pain of my working for awakening is limited; it is like the pain of inflicting a wound on the body in order to remove a thorn stuck within' (BCA VII.22).

If you can undertake the painful aspects of (practising) the Dharma in this way, then you will be a great hero who will have repelled the attack of saṃsāra and defeated the foe that is the defilements. In the world, someone who slays ordinary enemies that would die anyway is called a 'hero', yet he is not a hero at all. It is as if he was stabbing his sword into corpses. As it is stated in 'Engaging in the Conduct for

449 On the three kinds of suffering, see V.20 and Th.152.
450 See V.47.

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Awakening', 'Those who have slain all the pain, defeated the enemies that are hatred and the rest (of the defilements) are victorious heroes – the rest are (as if they were) killing corpses' (BCA VI.20).

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.235–36, trans. T.A.

Patience in understanding the Dharma ***V.53***

The third and last type of patience is putting up with the difficulty of comprehending the profound Dharma teachings: patient acceptance which is open to its depth and challenges. In particular, it refers to the ultimate patience of tolerating the teaching (and experience) of emptiness. Gampopa's short definition is supplemented by an illustrative story from 'The Words of my Perfect Teacher'.

Patience in understanding the Dharma, according to the 'Stages of the Bodhisattva', means 'having faith in eight subjects, such as the good qualities of the Three Jewels and so forth.' Furthermore, it means having faith and patience with respect to the fact of suchness, the emptiness of both identities.[451]

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.235–36, trans. T.A.

The Noble Lord (Atiśa) was once visited by two Indian monks who were abiding by the twelve good qualities of training.[452] First he gave them a teaching on the absence of personal identity and both of them were very happy. But when he started telling them about the lack of identity of other phenomena, they became frightened and begged him not to talk like that. When they heard him quoting from the profound (Mahāyāna) sūtras, they blocked their ears. Atiśa became upset and told them: 'Unless you train yourselves in the awakening-mind of loving kindness and compassion and develop trust in the profound Dharma (of emptiness), you are not getting anywhere by just keeping your vows intact.'

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.397–98, trans. T.A.

The perfection of vigour

Vigour in practising the Dharma ***V.54***

Even though you might feel inclined to practise the Dharma, if you keep putting it off till tomorrow and tomorrow, you will run out of our human life. You must stop wasting your whole life while still wanting to practise the Dharma. As Padma Karpo, the famous Drukpa Kagyupa master has said: 'This human life, like an animal being led to the slaughterhouse, with each passing moment is getting closer to death. If you put off till tomorrow what could be done today, your lamentation on your deathbed will be of no avail'

Therefore, do not waste another moment deferring Dharma practice. Just like an intelligent man who has found a snake on his lap, or like a maiden whose hair has caught fire, immediately get rid of all

451 That is the emptiness of personal and phenomenal identites. See V.75 and 76.

452 This refers to the twelve main rules regulating the behaviour of monks. There are three related to food, three to clothes, and six to places of dwelling and resting.

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worldly activities and start practising the Dharma straight away! Unless you do that, you will be oppressed by never-ending worldly activities following one another like ripples of water, and the time to practise the Dharma will never arrive. That time will only come when you make up your mind to get rid of all worldly preoccupations. As the All-knowing Longchen Rabjam[453] has said, 'Worldly activities never stop until we die, but when they are dropped they naturally stop', as well as 'Activities are like children's games; as long as they are continued they do not end, but they are finished as soon as we leave them.'

So once you have developed a wish to practise the Dharma, draw inspiration from (the thought of) impermanence and start practising it immediately without falling under the power of laziness or procrastination even for an instant. This is what we call 'vigour in practising the Dharma.'

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.399–400, trans. T.A.

453 See V.22.

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CHAPTER 8

MEDITATION

THERAVĀDA

The purpose of meditation

While ethical action restrains external expression of the defilements, meditation weakens, and with wisdom ultimately overcomes, the mental impulses rooted in craving and spiritual ignorance that lead to any such actions, as well as to future rebirths, with all their sufferings. The relation of meditation to the overall path can be seen in passages Th.97–101.

The nature of mind *Th.121*

These verses highlight the fickle nature of mind, its need for training, and how this will bring happiness. Here Māra, or the 'Deadly One', is a tempter-deity that is seen to embody both death and sensual desire, which leads to rebirth and re-death, as well as māra *being a term for the defilements. The 'realm of Māra' is also anything subject to impermanence and hence death.*

Just as an arrow-maker straightens an arrow shaft, likewise the wise person straightens the mind: so fickle, unsteady, so difficult to guard, and so difficult to restrain.

As a fish born in water cast on land throbs and quivers, likewise this mind gets agitated. Therefore, one ought to abandon the realm of Māra.

Taming the mind that is difficult to control, that alters fast, and that falls upon whatever it likes, is commendable. A tamed mind brings happiness.

Let the wise person guard the mind, so difficult to discern, extremely subtle, falling upon wherever it likes. A guarded mind brings happiness.

Those who restrain the mind that travels afar, that wanders alone, that is devoid of a body and lying within the cave (of the heart), are liberated from the bonds of Māra.

Wisdom never comes to fulfilment in one whose mind is not steadfast, who knows not the Good Dhamma and whose faith wavers.

There is no fear for the wakeful one, whose mind does not tend towards faults and is unagitated, and who has gone beyond both karmically beneficial and karmically harmful actions.

Realizing that this body is as fragile as a clay pot, and fortifying this mind as a city, one should combat Māra with the weapon of wisdom. One should guard what has been conquered and remain unattached.

Before long, for sure, this body will lie upon the earth, cast away being rid of consciousness like a useless log.

Whatever harm an enemy may do to an enemy, or a hater to a hater, an ill-directed mind may inflict greater harm on a person.

Neither mother, nor father, nor any other relative can do one greater good than a well-directed mind.

Citta-vagga: Dhammapada 33–43, trans. P.D.P.

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Th.122 The need to train the mind

This passage emphasizes how harmful the mind can be when unwholesome tendencies in it are left unrestrained, yet how beneficial it is when cultivated by meditative training.

Monks, I do not observe anything else that is so immensely conducive to harm as an undeveloped, uncultivated mind. An undeveloped, uncultivated mind is immensely conducive to harm.

Monks, I do not observe anything else that is so immensely conducive to benefit as a developed, cultivated mind. A developed, cultivated mind is immensely conducive to benefit. ...

Monks, I do not observe anything else that is so immensely conducive to harm as an uncontrolled, unprotected, unrestrained, untamed mind. ...

Monks, I do not observe anything else that is so immensely conducive to benefit, as a controlled, protected, restrained, tamed mind. ...

Akammanīya-vagga, suttas 9–10 and *Adanta-vagga, suttas* 9–10: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.6–7, trans. P.D.P.

The mind's negative underlying tendencies but also bright potential

Th.123 The innocent mind is not completely pure

This passage shows that even the mind of a baby, prior to having any negative mind-states, has the latent, underlying tendencies to later develop these. Being born a human is a good rebirth, and is the product of past good actions, but unenlightened humans are still fettered by various tendencies that keep them within the round of rebirths, and their pains.

A young tender baby lying on its back does not even have the idea of 'personality', so how could view on personality[454] arise in him? Yet the underlying tendency to view on personality lies latent in him.

A young tender baby lying on its back does not even have the idea of 'states', so how could vacillating doubt about (wholesome and unwholesome) states arise in him? Yet the underlying tendency to vacillation lies latent in him.

A young tender baby lying on its back does not even have the idea of 'rules', so how could clinging to rules and vows arise in him? Yet the underlying tendency to clinging to rules and vows lies latent in him.

A young tender baby lying on its back does not even have the idea of 'sensual pleasures', so how could sensual desire regarding sensual pleasures arise in him? Yet the underlying tendency to attachment to sensual pleasures lies latent in him.

A young tender baby lying on its back does not even have the idea of 'beings', so how could ill-will towards beings arise in him? Yet the underlying tendency to ill-will lies latent in him.

Mahā-mālunkya Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.432–433, trans. P.H.

454 Any views which takes one or other of the mental or physical processes making up one's personality as being a permanent Self or its possession.

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The brightly shining mind *Th.124*

This passage, though, describes the basic nature of mind as 'brightly shining', even though it is often defiled by defilements which 'visit' (which often act like visitors to a house that then behave like they owned the place). In the Theravāda tradition, the commentator Buddhaghosa refers[455] *to this radiant mind as the 'naturally pure latent resting state of mind'. In the Mahāyāna traditions, much more is said of it and it came to be equated with the Buddha-nature (see passages M.12–13, 111–112), or embryonic Buddha within beings. When unobscured by defilements (which meditation facilitates), the brightly shining basic nature of mind can be a basis for the attainment of the liberating insight that leads to the experience of nirvana; otherwise, defilements will in time return and the various kinds of rebirth will follow, though some in the bright heavenly realms where the defilements are weak.*

Monks, this mind is brightly shining, but it is defiled by defilements which arrive. The uninstructed ordinary person does not understand this as it has come to be. So, I say, there is no meditative cultivation of the mind for the uninstructed ordinary person.

Monks, this mind is brightly shining, but it is free of defilements which arrive. The instructed disciple of the noble one understands this as has come to be. So, I say, there is meditative cultivation of the mind for the instructed disciple of the noble one.

Accharā-saṅghāta-vagga, suttas 1 and 2: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.10, trans. P.H.

The five hindrances and other defilements

The five hindrances as the main 'defilements which arrive' *Th.125*

This passage shows that the key defiling 'visitors' to the mind are the five hindrances.

Monks, there are these five defilements of gold, defiled by which gold is neither malleable nor wieldy nor brightly shining, but brittle and not properly fit for working: ... iron ... copper ... tin ... lead ... and silver. ...

So too, monks, there are these five defilements of the mind, defiled by which the mind is neither malleable nor wieldy nor brightly shining, but brittle and not rightly composed for the destruction of the intoxicating inclinations. What five? Desire for sensual pleasures ... ill-will ... dullness and lethargy ... restlessness and worry ... vacillation.

Kilesa Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.92, trans. P.H.

The hindrances as detrimental to wisdom *Th.126*

These passages emphasize that the hindrances weaken wisdom and make the mind unclear and unable either to understand what leads to true happiness or to attain liberating insights. They are often opposed to the seven 'factors of awakening' (see end of passage Th.139).

Monks, these five hindrances are makers of blindness, causing lack

455 *Aṅguttara-nikāya* commentary, I.61.

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of vision, causing lack of higher knowledge, detrimental to wisdom, tending to vexation, and not conducive to nirvana. ...

These seven factors of awakening monks, are makers of vision, makers of knowledge, promote the increase of wisdom, without vexation, and conducive to nirvana.

Nīvaraṇa Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.97, trans. P.H.

When a monk has not abandoned these five obstacles, hindrances that overwhelm the mind and weaken wisdom, with his powerless and weak wisdom it is impossible for him to understand what is for the true welfare of himself, others, or both, or to experience superhuman distinction in knowing and seeing appropriate to the noble ones.

Āvaraṇā Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya III.63–64, trans. P.H.

Monks, suppose there were a pool of water that was clear, calm and undisturbed, and a man with good sight stood on the bank: he could see the oysters and shells, the gravel and pebbles as they lie, or the shoals of fish as they dart about and are at rest. Why? Because of the water's clarity. So too, it is possible for a monk with clarity of mind to know what is truly beneficial for himself, for others, and for both, and to experience superhuman distinction in knowing and seeing appropriate to the noble ones.

Paṇihitācchanna-vagga, sutta 6: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.9, trans. P.H.

Th.127 Overcoming the five hindrances

This passage likens the hindrances to five things that limit one's freedom: desire for sensual pleasures is like being in debt - one owes energy to the objects of one's habitual desires; ill-will is like being ill, so that one has no appetite for anything - for when one is angry, nothing pleases one; dullness and lethargy are like being in prison - for one is stuck in lethargy and cannot rouse oneself to apply oneself to and enjoy anything; restlessness and worry are like being a slave - one is bossed about by one's emotional highs and lows; and vacillation is like travelling through a desolate land - for it is a barren period of indecision and wavering doubt. Suspending the five hindrances is done either by hearing a step-by-step discourse (see passage Th.28) or, as here, by meditation, which then allows the mind to enter the meditative absorptions (see Th.140).

Abandoning worldly longing, he dwells with a mind without worldly longing, and his mind is purified of it. Abandoning the fault of ill-will, he dwells with a mind without ill-will and, sympathetic to the welfare of all living beings, his mind is purified of the fault of ill-will. Abandoning dullness and lethargy, he dwells without them, perceiving light, mindful and clearly comprehending, his mind is purified of dullness and lethargy. Abandoning restlessness and worry, dwelling unagitated and inwardly calmed, his mind is purified of restlessness and worry. Abandoning vacillation, he dwells with vacillation left behind, without uncertainty as to what things are wholesome, his mind is purified of vacillation.

Just as a man who had taken a loan to develop his business, and whose business had prospered, might pay off his old debts, and with what was left over could support a wife, might think: 'Before this I de-

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veloped my business by borrowing, but now it has prospered ...', and he would be glad and be happy about that.

Just as a man who was ill, suffering, terribly sick, with no appetite, and weak in body, might after a time recover, and regain his appetite and bodily strength, and he might think: 'Before this I was ill ...', and he would be glad and be happy about that.

Just as a man might be bound in prison, and after a time he might be freed from his bonds without any loss, with no deduction from his possessions. He might think: 'Before this I was in prison ...', and he would be glad and be happy about that.

Just as a man might be a slave, not his own master, dependent on another, unable to go where he liked, and after some time he might be freed from slavery, able to go where he liked, might think: 'Before this I was a slave ...' And he would be glad and be happy about that.

Just as a man, laden with goods and wealth, might go on a long journey through desolate country where food was scarce and danger abounded, and after a time he would get through the desolate country and arrive safe and sound at the edge of a village, might think: 'Before this I was in danger, now I am safe at the edge of a village', and he would be glad and be happy about that.

As long, sire, as a monk does not perceive the disappearance of the five hindrances in himself, he feels as if in debt, in sickness, in bonds, in slavery, on a road through desolate country. But when he perceives the disappearance of the five hindrances in himself, it is as if he were freed from debt, from sickness, from bonds, from slavery, from the perils of a road through desolate country.

Sāmañña-phala Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.71–73, trans. P.H.

The four intoxicating inclinations and their interweaving with spiritual ignorance *Th.128*

The deepest faults in the mind are each called an āsava *(Pāli, Skt* āśrava*): something which 'flows' in a certain way, and ferments, so as to be akin to a festering sore, leeching off energy from the mind, and something which brings intoxication. Sometimes translated as 'cankers' or 'taints' or 'outflows', they are best seen as 'intoxicating inclinations' – just as a leaning towards drinking alcohol leads to intoxication, when acted on. The* arahant*, or enlightened person, is often defined as one who is totally without these. They are tendencies which flow or reach out towards three things: sensual pleasures, a way of being or identity, and spiritual ignorance. Sometimes a fourth is added: towards fixed, dogmatic views. The following passage sees the intoxicating inclinations as interwoven with spiritual ignorance: they sustain ignorance, one of them is itself the inclination towards ignorance, and ignorance itself sustains the inclinations. One can see the inclination as deep-rooted, ingrained bad habits that need deep spiritual insight to illuminate them and so dispel the shadows in which they breed. When the mind's radiance is uncovered in meditation, one must use the light to examine things very carefully.*

With the arising of the intoxicating inclinations there is the arising of ignorance. With the cessation of the intoxicating inclinations there is the cessation of ignorance. ...

There are three intoxicating inclinations: the intoxicating inclination towards sensual pleasures, the intoxicating inclinations towards

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a way of being, and the intoxicating inclination towards ignorance. With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of the intoxicating inclinations. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of the intoxicating inclinations.

Sammā-diṭṭhi Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.54–55, trans. P.H.

The importance of attention

Th.129 Attention makes the difference

What makes the crucial difference regarding whether or not defilements 'visit' or stay in the mind is how the mental faculty or mind (mano) *is applied to objects, with attention* (manasikāra) *literally being work-of-mano. Hence the need for mindful heedfulness or alert, wise attentiveness, so as to avoid mishandling the mind's relationships with its objects and so inviting defilements to visit or remain.*

Monks, whatever states are unwholesome, have a part in unwholesomeness, are on the side of unwholesomeness: all these have mind as their forerunner. First arises mind, and those unwholesome states follow after.

Monks, whatever states are wholesome, have a part in wholesomeness, are on the side of wholesomeness: all these have mind as their forerunner. First arises mind, and those wholesome states follow after.

Monks, I do not see a single thing that so causes unwholesome states to arise and arisen wholesome states to decline as heedlessness.

Accharā-saṅghāta-vagga, suttas 6, 7 and 8: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.11, trans. P.H.

Mind is the forerunner of all mental states[456]. Mind is their chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with a sullied mind, because of that, suffering will follow one, even as the wheel follows the foot of the draught-ox.

Mind is the forerunner of all mental states. Mind is their chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with an unsullied mind, because of that, happiness follows, even as one's shadow that never leaves.

Dhammapada 1–2, trans. P.H.

Th.130 The role of wise, probing attention in undermining attachment, hatred and delusion

Wise attention is key to overcoming the mental defilements that lead to life's pains. These defilements are sometimes summarised as: attachment (sensual lust, but also any kind of lusting after things), hatred, and delusion. The destruction of these three marks the attainment of awakening, and greed, hatred and delusion are the roots of unwholesome actions (see passage Th.102).

Attachment is blameable to a small degree but its removal is slow; hatred is blameable to a great degree but its removal is quicker;[457] delusion is blameable to a great degree and its removal is slow. ...

456 'Mind' (*mano*) refers here to the awareness wich is applied in attention, while 'mental states' (*dhammas*) are all other mental qualities, which follow its lead as regards their object and ethical tone.

457 It is ended at an earlier stage of the spiritual path than attachment or delusion.

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For one engaged in unwise attention as regards (an object's) attractive aspect, unarisen attachment will arise and arisen attachment will increase and become strong. ... For one engaged in unwise attention as regards (an object's) irritating aspect, unarisen hatred will arise and arisen hatred will increase and become strong. ... For one engaged in unwise attention, unarisen delusion will arise and arisen delusion will increase and become strong.

For one wisely attending to (an object's) unattractive aspect, unarisen attachment will not arise and arisen attachment will be abandoned. ... For one wisely attending to the liberation of mind by loving kindness, unarisen hatred will not arise and arisen hatred will be abandoned. ... For one wisely attending, unarisen delusion will not arise and arisen delusion will be abandoned.

Aññatitthiyā Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.200, trans. P.H.

Five ways to remove distracting thoughts *Th.131*

This passage suggests five ways to overcome an unwholesome thought captured by negative desire, hatred or delusion: turning the mind to a counteracting wholesome thought (as in the above passage); seeing the disadvantage of the thought; turning the mind to something else to engage its attention; slowing down and stilling the thought-process (the commentary suggests doing so by tracing back how the mind frothed itself up into its state, making a mountain out of a molehill, so to speak); and finally using will-power to eject the thought. Later methods are only to be used if the earlier ones have not worked, so the last one, forceful will-power, is the last resort, to be used only when there is something in the mind that remains gripping onto the negative thought.

When a monk is intent on the higher mind, there are five focuses he should attend to at the appropriate times. What five? There is the case where evil, unwholesome thoughts mixed with desire, hate or delusion, arise in a monk while he is referring to and attending to a particular focus. He should attend to another focus, apart from that one, connected with what is wholesome. When he does so, those evil, unwholesome thoughts mixed with desire, hatred and delusion will be abandoned, will come to an end. When they are abandoned, the mind settles within, becomes quieted, one-pointed and composed. This is just as when a skilled carpenter or his apprentice would use a small peg to knock out, drive out, and pull out a large one ...

If evil, unskilful unwholesome thoughts mixed with desire, hate or delusion still arise in the monk while he is attending to this other focus, connected with what is wholesome, he should scrutinize the drawbacks of those thoughts thus, 'Truly, these thoughts of mine are unwholesome, blameworthy and ripen in suffering.' When he does so, those evil, unwholesome thoughts ... will be abandoned ... the mind settles within, becomes quieted, one-pointed and composed. This is just as a young woman or man fond of adornment, would be horrified, humiliated, and disgusted if the carcass of a snake or a dog or a human being were hung from her neck ...

If evil, unskilful unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, hate, or delusion still arise in the monk while he is scrutinizing the drawbacks of those thoughts, he should try to forget them and pay no attention to them. When he does so, those evil, unwholesome thoughts

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... will be abandoned ... the mind settles within, becomes quieted, one-pointed and composed. This is just as a man with good eyes, not wanting to see forms that had come into range, would close his eyes or look away ...

If evil, unskilful unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, hate, or delusion still arise in the monk while he is trying to forget them and paying no attention to them, he should attend to the stilling of the thought-activities of those thoughts. When he does so, those evil, unwholesome thoughts ... will be abandoned ... the mind settles within, becomes quieted, one-pointed and composed. This is just as when the thought would occur to a man walking quickly, 'Why am I walking quickly? Why don't I walk slowly?' So he walks slowly. The thought occurs to him, 'Why am I walking slowly? Why don't I stand?' So he stands. The thought occurs to him, 'Why am I standing? Why don't I sit down?' So he sits down. The thought occurs to him, 'Why am I sitting? Why don't I lie down?' So he lies down. In this way, giving up the grosser posture, he takes up the more refined one ...

If evil, unskilful unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, hate, or delusion still arise in the monk while he is attending to the stilling of the thought-activities of those thoughts then, pressing the lower jaw with the upper jaw and pushing the tongue on the palate, he should beat down, constrain, and crush his mind with his mind. When he does so, those evil, unwholesome thoughts ... will be abandoned ... the mind settles within, becomes quieted, one-pointed and composed. This is just as when a strong man, seizing a weaker man by the head or the throat or the shoulders, would beat him down, constrain, and crush him ...

Now when a monk ... [composes the mind by applying the above methods], he is called the monk who has mastery over the pathways of thought. Whatever thought he wants to think, that he thinks, whatever thought he does not want to think, that he does not think. He has cut off craving, removed the fetters and rightfully overcoming conceit made an end of suffering.

Vitakka-saṇṭhāna Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.119–122, trans. P.H. and P.D.P.

Calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) meditations

Th.132 **The need to overcome both affective and cognitive defilements**

*Suffering and the round of rebirths are sustained by unwholesome forms of two aspects of the mind: the 'affective', to do with the emotions, and the 'cognitive', to do with how one sees and understands things. These are interrelated, for emotional turbulence makes it difficult to see things clearly, and confusion and deluded misperception feeds emotional turbulence. The key unwholesome emotion is craving, which can be seen to encompass attachment and hatred: craving for and craving to be rid of. The key cognitive fault is spiritual ignorance or delusion. The following passage makes clear that both affective and cognitive defilements must be overcome, respectively by meditative calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Working together, these bring about a state in which direct knowledge can arise in a calm, clear, peaceful mind. One*

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may develop deep calm then insight, insight then deep calm, alternate them, or just develop insight with sufficient calm to dampen any excitement that comes from this (see Th.138 introduction).

Monks, these two things pertain to higher knowledge. What two? Calm and insight. When calm is developed, what benefit is experienced? The (heart-)mind is developed. When the mind is developed, what benefit is experienced? That which is attachment is abandoned. When insight is developed, what benefit is experienced? Wisdom is developed. When wisdom is developed, what benefit is experienced? That which is ignorance is abandoned.

A mind defiled by attachment is not liberated, and wisdom defiled by ignorance is not developed. Thus, monks, through the fading away of attachment there is liberation of mind, and from the fading away of ignorance there is liberation by wisdom.

Bāla-vagga, sutta 10, *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.61, trans. P.H.

Meditative absorption and wisdom are mutually dependent *Th.133*

In this passage, the meditative absorption that arises from intent samatha *meditation is seen to be mutually dependent on wisdom, which most typically is seen to develop from* vipassanā *meditation.*

There is no meditative absorption for one lacking in wisdom, and no wisdom for one lacking meditative absorption. One in whom there are both meditative absorption and wisdom is, indeed, close to nirvana.

Dhammapada 372, trans. P.H.

Recollection of the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and of the reality of death

Recollection of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha *Th.134*

A set of practices which are seen as very helpful for suspending the five hindrances is that of the recollection of the Buddha, of the Dhamma and of the Sangha: mindfully contemplating the qualities of these three (see Th.1 and section introduction before 8, and 137 and 181). The second of these passages is from a post-canonical meditation manual.

When a noble disciple recollects thus, on that occasion his mind is not taken up with attachment, hatred or delusion; his mind is straight, focused on the Tathāgata or Dhamma or Sangha. A noble disciple whose mind is straight gains inspiration of the meaning, the inspiration of the Dhamma, gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. When he is gladdened, joy arises; for one uplifted by joy the body becomes tranquil; one tranquil of body feels easeful pleasure; for one who is at ease, the mind becomes composed. This is called a noble disciple who dwells evenly amidst an uneven generation, who dwells unafflicted amidst an afflicted generation, who has entered the stream of the Dhamma and cultivates recollection of the Buddha ... of the Dhamma ... of the Sangha

Mahānāma Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya III.285, trans. P.H.

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When a monk is devoted to recollection of the Buddha, he ... conquers fear and dread. He is able to endure pain. He comes to feel as if he were living in the Master's presence. And his body, when the recollection of the Buddha's special qualities dwells in it, becomes as worthy of veneration as a shrine room. His mind tends to the plane of the Buddhas. When he encounters an opportunity for transgression, he has present moral shame and concern for consequences as vivid as though he were face to face with the master.

Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa, VII.67, pp.212–13, trans. P.H.

Th.135 Recollection of death

Passages Th.75–77 contain reflections on death, and Th.138 includes reflections on the stages of decomposition after death. The passage here is a specific meditation on death, used to encourage spiritual effort here and now.

Monks, mindfulness of death, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit, culminating in the deathless ... Here, monks, when day has receded and night has approached, a monk reflects thus: 'I could die on account of many causes, such as snake bite ... falling ... food poisoning ... disturbance of bile ... phlegm ... or wind ...'.The monk should reflect thus: 'Do I have any bad, unwholesome qualities that have not been abandoned, which might be an obstacle for me if I were to die tonight?' If he sees that he has, then he should put forth extraordinary desire, effort, zeal, enthusiasm, indefatigability, mindfulness and clear comprehension to abandon those unwholesome qualities.

Maraṅa-sati Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya III.306–07, trans. P.H.

Meditation on the four limitless qualities: loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity

Th.136 Cultivating loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity

This passage concerns the meditative cultivation of what are known as the four 'limitless qualities', as when fully developed they are of limitless scope, breaking down the barriers between oneself and all other beings. They are also known (Th.114) as the 'brahma-vihāras' - *'divine abidings', that when developed to a high degree bring a mind-state akin to that of the* brahmā *deities, and which lead to rebirth at their level, if one does not attain awakening in the present life.*

He abides pervading one direction with a mind imbued with loving kindness, extensive, lofty, unlimited, free from envy, free from malice, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth direction, and thus the entire world, everywhere, above, below and across in relation to every individual living being.

Just, Vāseṭṭha, as a mighty blower of a conch makes himself heard in four directions without much difficulty, similarly when loving kindness is so developed, whatever action is applied within a circumscribed range, it does not remain in that context, it does not stay in that context. This too, Vāseṭṭha, is a path leading to union with Brahmā.

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Further, Vāseṭṭha, a monk abides pervading one direction with a mind imbued with compassion ... the entire world ... with a mind imbued with empathetic joy...with a mind imbued with equanimity ... This too, Vāseṭṭha is a path leading to union with Brahmā.

Tevijja Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.250–251, trans. P.D.P.

The shining mind and loving kindness ***Th.137***

The first of these passages comes immediately after passage Th.124, suggesting that loving kindness is a quality of the brightly shining mind, a point then reinforced by the second passage.

If a monk were to cultivate the emancipation of mind by loving kindness even for the duration of the snapping of the fingers, such a monk is called one who is abiding not empty of meditative absorption, practising the message of the teacher, practising in accordance with the teacher's advice, partaking of the alms-food of the land not in vain. What to speak of those who practise it intensely?

Accharā-saṅghāta-vagga, sutta 3: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.10, trans. P.D.P.

The liberation of mind by loving kindness ... shines and glows and radiates ... like the radiance of the moon.

Mettā-bhāvanā Sutta: Itivuttaka 19–20, trans. P.H.

The four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) as ways to cultivate insight (*vipassanā*) and calm (*samatha*)

The four foundations of mindfulness as the direct way to liberation ***Th.138***

This passage concerns a crucial kind of meditation practice developed by the Buddha, the four satipaṭṭhānas*: 'foundations' or 'applications' of mindfulness (*sati*). These are to calmly observe and note various qualities of the body (*kāya*), feelings (*vedanā*), mind-states (*citta*) and reality-patterns (*dhamma*), the latter being key mental and physical processes according to the Buddha's analysis of reality, the Dhamma. A repeated refrain concerns contemplation of the relevant quality as it arises, and as it ceases, both internally, within oneself, and 'externally', which may mean in other persons. The practice of the* satipaṭṭhānas *is sometimes equated with* vipassanā *meditation, but in fact it is relevant to both* samatha *and* vipassanā*, each of which require strong mindfulness. The various objects of contemplation described in this* sutta *perhaps comprise the earliest Buddhist list of meditation objects. They can be the objects of focused calm or discerning insight, or both. The ones under the 'reality-patterns' heading are particularly linked to* vipassanā*. In a particular meditation sitting, a meditator may focus on only one of the objects, or several.*

*These contemplations described here help to suspend the five hindrances. Once this is done, they may be utilized in one of four ways (*Aṅguttara-nikāya *II.156–158): i) they may be used to develop the four absorptions, with an emphasis on* samatha*, before being opened out to observe in a* vipassanā *mode; ii) they may continue to be applied on the brink of the first absorption, with an*

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emphasis on vipassanā, *though allowing the absorptions to develop in time; iii) they may be used to develop the absorptions, though applying* vipassanā *to each before moving on to the next; or iv) they may be done in a purely* vipassanā *mode, without entering the absorptions.*

In recent years, 'mindfulness' has become a popular idea, and a secular adaptation of it is being applied in many spheres, such as Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy. These take certain aspects of the full-spectrum Buddhist mindfulness as a way to help people stand back from their thoughts and feelings so as to calmly observe them and not be drawn into negative thought patterns. The emphasis here is on a non-judgemental awareness of present experiences and thoughts. This is an important aspect of Buddhist mindfulness, though this also includes clear recollection of the past and of beneficial qualities and teachings. Cultivating a discerning, though non-blaming recognition of the difference between harmful and helpful states of mind is also important.The eight-week courses in secular mindfulness have been criticised for not going very deep, though a course of Buddhist mindfulness can also only go so far in eight weeks.

At one time the Blessed One was living among the Kuru people, in the hamlet named Kammāssadhamma in the Kuru country. There the Blessed One addressed the monks: 'Monks, this is the direct way for the purification of beings, for ending grief and lamentation, for ending pain and unhappiness, for attaining understanding and for realizing nirvana, that is, the four foundations of mindfulness. What four?

[Mindfulness of the body: breathing]

Here monks, a monk abides, in respect of the body, reflectively observing[458] the body, possessed of effort, clearly comprehending, and mindful, removing intense desire for and unhappiness with the world. He abides, in respect of feelings, reflectively observing feelings, possessed of effort ... in respect of the mind, reflectively observing mind, possessed of effort ... in respect of reality-patterns, reflectively observing reality-patterns, possessed of effort ...

Monks, how does a monk abide in respect of the body reflectively observing the body? Here, the monk gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house, sits cross-legged, the body erect and mindfulness established in front. He breathes in mindfully and breathes out mindfully. Breathing in long, he wisely knows, "I breathe in long." Breathing out long, he wisely knows, "I breathe out long." Breathing in short, he wisely knows, "I breathe in short." Breathing out short, he wisely knows, "I breathe out short." He trains, "reflectively experiencing the entire body,[459] I breathe in; reflectively experiencing the entire body, I breathe out." He trains, "Calming the bodily activity,[460] I breathe in; calming the bodily activity, I breathe out." Just as a clever (wood) turner or his apprentice, making a long turn wisely knows, "I pull it long", and making a short turn wisely knows "I pull it

458 Or 'contemplating'. The 'reflectively' aspect should not be seen to indicate extended thinking about, but, rather, discerning awareness.

459 There is debate over whether this means the whole physical body, or the whole body of breath.

460 Explained at *Majjhima-nikāya* I.301 as the in-and-out-breaths.

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short",[461] in the same manner, breathing in long, he wisely knows "I breathe in long"; breathing out long, he wisely knows "I breathe out long." Breathing in short he wisely knows, "I breathe in short", and breathing out short he wisely knows "I breathe out short." ... He trains, "Calming the bodily activity I breathe in, calming the bodily activity, I breathe out."

[Refrain:] Thus, he abides in respect of the body, reflectively observing the body internally, or he abides in respect of the body, reflectively observing the body externally. Or he abides in respect of the body, reflectively observing the body internally and externally. Or he abides reflectively observing the arising nature in the body or the passing away nature in the body, or the arising and passing away nature in the body. Or for him mindfulness is established to the effect, 'There is the body", merely to the extent of knowing, to the extent of reflective mindfulness. He abides unattached and does not grasp at anything in the world. It is thus, monks, that the monk abides, in respect of the body, reflectively observing the body.

[Mindfulness of the body:
postures, movements, bodily parts and elements]

Monks, further, a monk, while going, wisely knows, "I'm going", while standing, wisely knows "I'm standing", while sitting, wisely knows "I'm sitting", while lying, wisely knows, "I'm lying." Whatever posture the body maintains, that he wisely knows. Thus ... [*Refrain*].

Monks, further, a monk acts with clear comprehension when going forward or turning back, looking on, or looking around, bending, or stretching. He acts with clear comprehension when bearing the outer robe, the bowl and inner robes, when eating, drinking, biting, or tasting, when attending to the calls of nature, when gone, having stood, having sat, having lay down, having woken up, having spoken, when being silent ... [*Refrain*].

Monks, further, a monk reflectively considers this body up from the soles of the feet, down from the hair on the head, surrounded by the skin as full of various impurities, as: "There are in this body,[462] head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, veins, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, lower intestines, bowels, stomach, excreta, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, eye secretions, saliva, snot, oil of joints, and urine." Just like a bag of provisions having openings on both sides, is filled up with various grains such as rice, paddy, green grams, beans, sesame, and fine rice. A man who has sight would untie it and see reflectively, "This is rice, this, paddy, this, green gram, this, bean, this, sesame, and this is fine rice." Similarly, a monk reflectively sees this body up from the soles of the feet ... [*Refrain*].

Monks, further, a monk reflectively considers the body in whatever posture it is in, in terms of elements as, "There are in this body the elements: earth, water, fire, and wind." Just as a clever butcher or his ap-

461 This simile makes it clear that a 'long' breath is long as to extent, i.e. deep, rather than long as to time (a deep breath might still be breathed quickly as well as slowly).
462 Cf.V.59.

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prentice would be seated in a hut at a place where four highways cross, having a slaughtered cow and dissecting it into separate parts; similarly a monk reflectively sees this body ... in terms of elements ... [*Refrain*].

[Mindfulness of the body: a corpse and its stages of decay]

Monks, further, a monk draws a parallel concerning this body itself with a body that could be seen cast away in the charnel ground, dead one day, two days or three days ago, bloated, turned blue and festering. He draws a parallel with this same body as: "This body, too, has the same nature, is liable to be like that, does not transcend that." ... [*Refrain*].

Monks, further, a monk, as he would see a body cast away in the charnel ground, being eaten by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, foxes, or by numerous kinds of vermin, he draws a parallel with this same body as, "This body too has the same nature" ... [*Refrain*].

Monks, further, a monk, as he would see a body cast away in the charnel ground, a skeleton, with flesh and blood and connecting veins ... a skeleton without flesh, smeared with blood and connected with veins ... a skeleton without flesh and blood connected by veins ... a disconnected skeleton with bones scattered everywhere, the hand bone in one location, the foot bone in another, the knee bone, in another, the thigh bone, in another, the hip bone in another, the back bone in another, and the skull in another location; he draws a parallel with this same body as, "This body too has the same nature" ... [*Refrain*].

Monks, further, a monk, as he would see a body cast away in a charnel ground, the bones become white, the colour of a conch shell, the bones over a year old heaped up, the bones rotten and becoming powder, he draws a parallel with this same body as, "This body too has the same nature ..." ... [*Refrain*].

[Mindfulness of feelings]

Monks, how does a monk abide in respect of the feelings reflectively observing the feelings? Here, monks, a monk while experiencing a pleasant feeling wisely knows, "I'm experiencing a pleasant feeling", while experiencing a painful feeling wisely knows, "I'm experiencing a painful feeling", while experiencing a feeling neither unpleasant nor pleasant wisely knows, "I'm experiencing a feeling neither unpleasant nor pleasant"; while experiencing a pleasant feeling associated with material things he wisely knows "I'm experiencing a pleasant feeling associated with material things", or while experiencing a pleasant feeling not associated with material things[463] wisely knows "I'm experiencing a pleasant feeling not associated with material things", or while experiencing an unpleasant feeling associated with material things ... not associated with material things ... or while experiencing a feeling neither unpleasant nor pleasant associated with material things ... not associated with material things ... wisely knows ... [*Refrain*, replacing 'body' with 'feelings'].

643 Such as the joy and happiness that arise in meditative absorptions.

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[Mindfulness of the mind]

Monks, how does a monk abide in respect of the mind reflectively observing the mind? Here, a monk wisely knows a (state of) mind having attachment as, "It is a mind having attachment"; or a mind freed from attachment he wisely knows as, "It is a mind freed from attachment"; ... [likewise for hatred, and for delusion]; a mind that is cramped he wisely knows as "It is a mind that is cramped; or a mind that is scattered he wisely knows as, "It is a mind that is scattered"; or a mind that has become great (through meditative development) he wisely knows as, "It is a mind that has become great"; or a mind that has not become great he wisely knows as, "It is not a mind that has become great"; or a mind for which a superior mode is found he wisely knows as, "It is a mind for which a superior mode is found"; or a mind for which no superior mode is found he wisely knows as, "It is a mind for which no superior mode is found"; or a composed mind he wisely knows as, "It is a composed mind"; or a mind not composed he wisely knows as, "It is a mind not composed"; or a freed mind he wisely knows as, "It is a freed mind"; or a mind not freed he wisely knows as, "It is a mind not freed." ... [*Refrain*, replacing 'body' with 'mind'].

[Mindfulness of reality-patterns]

Monks, how does a monk abide in respect of reality-patterns reflectively observing reality-patterns? Here, a monk abides in respect of reality-patterns reflectively observing reality-patterns with regard to the five hindrances.[464] And how ...? Here, monks, a monk having sensual desire within wisely knows, "There is within me sensual desire", or not having sensual desire within he wisely knows, "There is no sensual desire within me"; and he also wisely knows how sensual desire that has not arisen is likely to arise, as well as how sensual desire that has arisen is likely to be abandoned, and how abandoned sensual desire is likely not to arise again. ... [In the same way he wisely knows about the other four hindrances: ill-will, dullness and lethargy, restlessness and worry, and vacillation]. ... [*Refrain*, replacing 'body' with 'reality-patterns'].

Further, monks, a monk abides in respect of reality-patterns reflectively observing reality-patterns with regard to the five grasped-at categories of existence.[465] And how ...? Here, the monk abides observing, "This is material form, this is the arising of material form, this is the ending of material form. ... [Likewise for feeling, for perception, for volitional activities, for consciousness]." ... [*Refrain*, replacing 'body' with 'reality-patterns'].

Further monks, a monk abides in respect of reality-patterns reflectively observing the reality-patterns with regard to the six internal and six external spheres of sense. And how ...? Here, monks, a monk wisely knows the eye, wisely knows visual forms, and whatever fetter occurs depending upon the two, that too, he wisely knows. He also wisely knows how a fetter that has not arisen is likely to arise, how a fetter that has arisen is likely to be abandoned, and how a fetter that

464 See Th.125–26.
465 See Th.151.

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has been abandoned is not likely to arise again. ... [He wisely knows in the same way about ear and sounds, nose and smells, tongue and tastes, body and tactile sensations, mind and mind objects]. ... [Refrain, replacing 'body' with 'reality-patterns'].

Further monks, a monk abides in respect of reality-patterns reflectively observing the reality-patterns with regard to the seven factors of awakening. And how ...? Here, monks, a monk while the awakening factor of mindfulness is found within, wisely knows, "The awakening factor of mindfulness is there within me", or while the awakening factor of mindfulness is not found within, he wisely knows "The awakening factor of mindfulness is not there within me"; he also wisely knows how the awakening factor of mindfulness that has not arisen is likely to arise, as well as how it is likely that the awakening factor of mindfulness that has arisen becomes perfect through cultivation. ... [He wisely knows in the same way about the other factors of awakening: investigation of Dhamma, vigour, joy, tranquillity, meditative concentration and equanimity]. ... [*Refrain*, replacing 'body' with 'reality-patterns'].

Further, monks, a monk abides in respect of reality-patterns reflectively observing the reality-patterns with regard to the four Truths of the Noble Ones. And how...? Here, monks, a monk wisely knows as it has come to be "This is the painful", "This is the origin of the painful", "This is the cessation of the painful", "This is the way leading to the cessation of the painful." ... [*Refrain*, replacing 'body' with 'reality-patterns'].'

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.55–62, trans. P.D.P.

Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*)

Th.139 **Mindfulness of breathing**

This passage describes the practice of mindfulness (sati) *of in-and-out breathing* (ānāpāna)*, and of various states that arise from this, in some detail. It has sixteen modes, the first four of which develop mindfulness of the body (in the same way as in passage Th.138), the next four develop mindfulness of feelings, the next four develop mindfulness of the mind, and the last four develop mindfulness of reality-patterns. As with the* satipaṭṭhānas*, mindfulness of breathing can be cultivated to develop* samatha, vipassanā*, or both.*

Monks, mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing, developed and constantly practised, is productive of great fruits and great benefits. When it is developed and constantly practised, the four foundations of mindfulness get completed. When the four foundations of mindfulness are developed and constantly practised, the seven factors of awakening get completed. When the seven factors of awakening are developed and constantly practised, knowledge and emancipation get completed. Monks, developed in what manner and constantly practised in what manner, is mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing productive of great fruits and great benefits?

[The sixteen modes of mindfulness of breathing]

Here monks, a monk, gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty house, sits in cross-legged posture. He breathes in mindfully and breathes out mindfully. (1) Breathing in long, he wisely knows, 'I

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breathe in long'; breathing out long, he wisely knows, 'I breathe out long'; (2) breathing in short, he wisely knows, 'I breathe in short'; breathing out short, he wisely knows, 'I breathe out short.' (3) He trains, 'reflectively experiencing the entire body, I breathe in; reflectively experiencing the entire body, I breathe out.' (4) He trains, 'Calming the bodily activity, I will breathe in; calming the bodily activity, I will breathe out.'[466]

(5) He trains [in each of the following ways], 'reflectively experiencing joy, I will breathe in'; 'reflectively experiencing joy, I will breathe out'; (6) 'reflectively experiencing easeful pleasure,[467] I will breathe in'; 'reflectively experiencing easeful pleasure, I will breathe out'; (7) 'reflectively experiencing the activity of mind,[468] I will breathe in'; 'reflectively experiencing the activity of mind, I will breathe out'; (8) 'calming the activity of mind, I will breathe in'; 'calming the activity of mind, I will breathe out';

(9) 'reflectively experiencing the mind, I will breathe in'; 'reflectively experiencing the mind, I will breathe out'; (10) 'increasingly gladdening the mind, I will breathe in'; 'increasingly gladdening the mind, I will breathe out'; (11) 'composing[469] the mind, I will breathe in'; 'composing the mind I, will breathe out'; (12) 'releasing the mind, I will breathe in'; 'releasing the mind, I will breathe out;

(13) 'reflectively observing impermanence, I will breathe in'; 'reflectively observing impermanence, I will breathe out'; (14) 'reflectively observing non-attachment, I will breathe in'; 'reflectively observing non-attachment, I will breathe out'; (15) 'reflectively observing cessation, I will breathe in'; 'reflectively observing cessation, I will breathe out'; (16) 'reflectively observing relinquishment, I will breath in'; 'reflectively observing relinquishment, I will breathe out.'

[The modes and their related foundation of mindfulness]

Mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing developed and constantly practised in this manner is productive of great fruits and great benefits.

Monks, developed and constantly practised in what manner does in-and-out breathing complete the four foundations of mindfulness? Monks, at whatever time, a monk ... [does 1–4 above] ... at that time a monk abides in respect of the body, observing the body, possessed of effort, clearly comprehending, and mindful, removing intense desire for and unhappiness with the world. I say that in-breaths and out-breaths are certain activities in bodies. Therefore, monks at such time, a monk abides in respect of the body, reflectively observing the body, possessed of effort, clearly comprehending, and mindful, removing intense desire for and unhappiness with the world.

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466 For notes on this section, see passage Th.138.

467 Joy (*pīti*) and easeful pleasure (*sukha*) are qualities that are key factors of the first two meditative absorptions, with the aspect of pleasant feeling (*sukhā vedanā*) that is happiness (*somanassa*) being a key factor of the third meditative absorption. While these qualities do not only occur in these absorptions, it is clear that this aspect of mindfulness of breathing certainly can include the mindfulness within these absorptions.

468 Explained at *Majjhima-nikāya* I.301 as feeling and perception.

469 In a meditatively concentrated state.

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Monks, at whatever time a monk trains ... [as in 5–8 above] ... at that time a monk abides in respect of feelings, reflectively observing feelings, possessed of effort ... I say that close attention to the in-breaths and the out-breaths is an activity (that occurs) in relation to feelings. Therefore, monks, at such time, a monk abides in respect of feelings, reflectively observing feelings, possessed of effort ...

Monks, at whatever time a monk trains ... [as in 9–12 above] ... at that time a monk abides in respect of mind, reflectively observing mind, possessed of effort ... Monks, I do not speak of in and out breathing to the person whose mindfulness is lost, and to him, who is lacking in clear comprehension. Therefore, monks, at that time a monk abides in respect of mind, reflectively observing mind, possessed of effort ...

Monks, when a monk trains ... [as in 13–16 above] ... at that time a monk abides in respect of reality-patterns reflectively observing reality-patterns, possessed of effort ... Having seen with wisdom the abandoning of intense desire and unhappiness, he is one who closely looks on with equanimity.[470] Therefore, monks, at such time, a monk abides in respect of reality-patterns, reflectively observing reality-patterns, possessed of effort ...

Monks, when mindfulness of in-and-out-breathing is developed and constantly practised in this manner, the four foundations of mindfulness become complete.

[The foundations of mindfulness develop the factors of awakening]

Monks, developed and constantly practised in what manner do the four foundations of mindfulness complete the seven factors of awakening?

At whatever time a monk abides in respect of the body, reflectively observing the body, possessed of effort, clearly comprehending, and mindful, removing intense desire for and unhappiness with the world, his mindfulness becomes closely established and it is not lost. At whatever time mindfulness becomes closely established and is not lost for a monk, at that time a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness. At that time for a monk the awakening factor of mindfulness becomes complete through development.

He, in this way, abiding mindfully investigates that state with wisdom, examines it, and enquires into it. At whatever time a monk in this way abiding mindfully investigates a state with wisdom ... a monk has ventured into the awakening factor of investigation of Dhamma. At that time a monk develops the awakening factor of investigation of Dhamma and for a monk it becomes complete through development.

He who investigates a state with wisdom, examines it, and enquires into it, ventures into unshaken vigour. At whatever time monks, for a monk who investigates, examines and enquires into that state, there is venturing into unshaken vigour, at that time a monk has ventured into the awakening factor of vigour. A monk develops at that time the awakening factor of vigour and it becomes complete for him through development.

470 Equanimity is a quality that is particularly strong in the third and especially fourth meditative absorption, as well as the formless attainments.

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For the person who has ventured into vigour arises joy unconnected with material things. Monks, at whatever time for a monk who has ventured into vigour, arises joy unconnected with material things, at that time he has ventured into the awakening factor of joy. At that time a monk develops the awakening factor of joy and it becomes complete for him through development.

For the person who is joyful, both the body and the mind are calmed. At whatever time both the mind and body of a monk are calmed, a monk ventures into the awakening factor of tranquillity. At that time a monk develops the awakening factor of tranquillity and it becomes complete for him through development.

The mind of whom the entire person is tranquil and is at ease, becomes composed. At whatever time the mind of the monk whose entire person is tranquil and who is at ease, becomes composed, a monk has ventured into the awakening factor of meditative concentration. At that time a monk develops the awakening factor of meditative concentration and it becomes complete for him through development.

He closely watches with equanimity the mind that has been so composed. At whatever time a monk closely watches with equanimity the mind that has been so composed, for him, there is venturing into the awakening factor of equanimity. At that time he develops the awakening factor of equanimity and it becomes complete through development.

[The above is then repeated for the situation of one reflectively observing feelings, the mind, then reality-patterns.]

When the four foundations of mindfulness are developed in this manner the seven factors of awakening become complete.

[The factors of awakening lead on to emancipation]

Monks, developed and constantly practised in what manner do the seven factors of awakening complete knowledge and emancipation? Here, monks, a monk develops the awakening factor of mindfulness supported by seclusion, non-attachment, and cessation, turning towards relinquishment; ... [Likewise for each of the other six factors of awakening.] ... The seven factors of awakening, developed and constantly practised in this manner complete knowledge and emancipation.

Ānāpāna-sati Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.82–88, trans. P.D.P.

Meditative absorptions, higher knowledges and formless attainments

The four meditative absorptions *Th.140*

Samatha *meditation uses strong mindfulness focused on such qualities as loving kindness or the process of breathing to suspend the five hindrances and so develop very concentrated, composed and calm states of mind. With the hindrances suspended, the mind can become joyful, happy, calm and focused, and thus enter the first of the four meditative absorptions* (jhānas)*. This can then be refined to reach up to the fourth meditative absorption, in which the mind is profoundly clear and calm, temporarily totally free of even the subtlest defilement, open and ready for liberating insights. None of the meditative ab-*

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sorptions themselves bring a final end to the defilements, and on their own they just lead to long-lasting and relatively peaceful rebirths, still subject to death and open to worse rebirths. They do, though, weaken the roots of the defilements and make it easier for insight to cut through them. For this to happen, attachment for even such subtle but conditioned states needs to be abandoned. The Buddha's awakening came after remembering having attained the first meditative absorption in his youth (see L.15), and then using this and the other meditative absorptions as a basis for such insight.

(1) To him who observes himself when these five hindrances have been abandoned, gladness arises. To him who is gladdened, joy arises. The entire frame of him, having a joyful mind, becomes relaxed. With the entire frame being relaxed, he experiences easeful pleasure. The mind of him who is at ease becomes composed. He, secluded from sensual desires and secluded from unwholesome qualities, enters and abides in the first meditative absorption, which is comprised of the joy and easeful pleasure associated with mental application and examination, and is born of seclusion. And with this joy and easeful pleasure born of seclusion, he so suffuses, drenches, fills and irradiates his body that there is no spot in his entire body that is untouched by this joy and easeful pleasure born of seclusion.

Just as a skilled bathman or his assistant, kneading the soap-powder which he has sprinkled with water, forms from it, in a metal dish, a soft lump, so that the ball of soap-powder becomes one oleaginous mass, bound with oil so that nothing escapes – so with this joy and easeful pleasure born of seclusion, this monk suffuses, drenches, fills and irradiates his body so that no spot remains untouched. ...

(2) Again, a monk, with the stilling of mental application and examination, enters and abides in the second meditative absorption, which is comprised of the joy and easeful pleasure born from a composed, concentrated state, devoid of mental application and examination, bringing inner clarity, being a one-pointed state of mind; and with this joy and happiness born of meditative concentration he so suffuses his body that no spot remains untouched.

Just as a lake fed by a spring, with no inflow from east, west, north or south, where the rain-god sends moderate showers from time to time, the water welling up from below, mingling with cool water, would suffuse, fill and irradiate that cool water, so that no part of the pool was untouched by it so, with this joy and happiness born of concentration he so suffuses his body that no spot remains untouched. ...

(3) Again, a monk, with non-attachment towards joy abides with equanimity, being mindful and with clear comprehension, he experiences happiness with the body and enters and abides in the third meditative absorption. (When in that state) the noble ones describe him by saying, 'he is possessed of equanimity, he is mindful, a person abiding in happiness; and with this happiness devoid of joy he so suffuses his body that no spot remains untouched.'

Just as if, in a pond of blue, red or white lotuses in which the flowers, born in the water, grown in the water, not growing out of the water, are fed from the water's depths, those blue, red or white lotuses, would be suffused ... with the cool water – so, with this happiness devoid of joy, the monk so suffuses his body that no spot remains untouched. ...

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(4) Again, a monk, having formerly given up pleasure and pain, with the disappearance of happiness and unhappiness remains in the fourth meditative absorption, which is without any pleasant or painful (feeling) and purified by equanimity and mindfulness.[471] And he sits suffusing his body with that mental purity and clarification so that no part of his body is untouched by it.

Just as if a man were to sit wrapped from head to foot in a white garment, so that no part of him was untouched by that garment – so his body is suffused.

Sāmañña-phala Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.73–76, trans. P.H. and P.D.P.

Knowledge and vision and supernormal forms of knowing *Th.141*

This passage continues from the above. From the fourth meditative absorption, the application of probing insight can lead to a variety of supernormal knowledges. Of the ones listed below, nos. 3 to 8 often form a group known as the six abhiññās, *or 'higher knowledges', and nos. 6 to 8 are known as the* tevijjās, *or 'threefold knowledge' that the Buddha is said to have attained on the night of his awakening (see passage L.15), the last of them bringing his experience of nirvana.*

When the mind is thus composed, purified, bright, without blemish, the defilements removed, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines the mind to knowing and seeing. He wisely knows thus: (1) 'This is the body of mine having form, comprised of the four great elements, having its origin from mother and father, growing with boiled rice and gruel, having the nature of being subject to impermanence, (needing to be) perfumed and massaged, getting broken up and scattered, and this is my consciousness which is attached and conjoined to it.'...

(2) When the mind is thus composed ... he directs and inclines the mind for the purpose of specially creating a mind-made body. From this (existing) body he specially creates another body having form, mind-made, having all the main and subsidiary parts, not lacking in any faculty. It is just as if a man were to draw out a reed from reed-grass ... or if a man were to draw out a sword from its sheath ...

(3) When the mind is thus composed ... he directs and inclines the mind towards the (acquisition of) supernormal powers. He experiences numerous forms of supernormal power (such as), having been one, he becomes many, having been many he becomes one ...[472]

(4) When the mind is thus composed ... he directs and inclines the mind to the acquisition of the element of the divine ear. With the element of the divine ear which is purified, and transcending that of the human, he hears both human and divine sounds, far and near ...

(5) When the mind is thus composed ... he directs and inclines the

471 It is said that 'pleasant feeling' is comprised of both the 'pleasure faculty', i.e. bodily 'pleasure', and the 'happiness faculty', i.e. mental pleasure (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* V.209–210). Moreover, the pleasure faculty ceases in the third absorption, along with the ceasing of joy, and the happiness faculty, which remains in the third absorption, ceases in the fourth absorption (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* V.213–216).

472 See L.35 and Th.48 for these supernormal powers.

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mind towards the acquisition of penetrative knowledge of (other) minds. Having penetrated with the mind into the mind of other beings, other individuals, he wisely knows a mind with attachment as a mind with attachment, a mind free from attachment as a mind free from attachment, a hating mind as a hating mind, a mind free from hate as a mind free from hate, a deluded mind as a deluded mind, a mind free from delusion as a mind free from delusion ...[473]

[For 6, 7 and 8, see L.15 on the three knowledges attained by the Buddha at his awakening.]

Sāmañña-phala Sutta: *Dīgha-nikāya* I.76–84, trans. P.D.P.

Th.142 The formless attainments and the cessation of perception and feeling

An alternative to developing the above knowledges, on the basis of the fourth meditative absorption, is to take the process of calming (samatha) *further, to develop the four formless attainments. Prior to his awakening, the Buddha was taught a way to attain the top two of the formless states (see L.10 and 11), but he saw these as not reaching awakening. In the meditative system he taught, the four formless states are entered via the fourth meditative absorption, which brings to them qualities developed through the meditative absorptions, such that they can then still all mental activity in a way that prepares for deep insight. They tune into the very roots of perception, respectively: one's sense of three-dimensional space within which one 'locates' anything with form; consciousness as that which makes any kind of awareness, including of space, possible; the no-thingness or not-something that is the contrast to anything in particular, especially things one fixates on due to attachment, hatred or delusion; and the very attenuated perception that is aware of even nothingness. Beyond the fourth formless state, the Buddha discovered a further state, the cessation of perception and feeling, developed through mastery of both* samatha *and* vipassanā *to high degrees. Attainment of this is another route to liberation.*

And further, Poṭṭhapāda, with the transcendence of all perceptions/ideas[474] of material form, putting an end to the idea of (sensory) impingement, with non-attention to ideas of variety, thinking: 'space is infinite', he enters and abides in the sphere of the infinity of space. For him, whatever previous perception/idea of form was there, ceases. At that time there is the subtle and real idea of the sphere of the infinity of space. He actually becomes at that time a person possessed of the subtle and real idea of the sphere of the infinity of space. In this way, too, one idea arises due to training and another idea ceases due to training.

And further, Poṭṭhapāda, the monk transcends entirely the sphere of the infinity of space and, thinking: 'Consciousness is infinite', enters and abides in the sphere of the infinity of consciousness. For him,

473 It appears that the Buddha used this kind of power when giving sermons, as he often responded to the unspoken thoughts of people in his audience. The list of states of mind that can be detected in others is also very similar to those known, in oneself and others, in mindfulness of states of mind in Th.129.

474 The term saññā can mean either a perception or an idea. In the formless realms, beyond perception through the five senses, the latter translation is more appropriate.

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whatever previous subtle and real idea of the infinity of space was there, ceases. At that time there is the subtle and real idea of the infinity of consciousness. He actually becomes at that time a person possessed of the subtle and real idea of the infinity of consciousness. In this way, too, one idea arises due to training and another idea ceases due to training.

And further, Poṭṭhapāda, the monk, by transcending entirely the sphere of the infinity of consciousness, thinking: 'There is nothing', enters and abides in the sphere of nothingness. For him, whatever previous subtle and actual idea of the infinity of consciousness was there, ceases. At that time there is the subtle and real idea of the sphere of nothingness. He actually becomes at that time a person possessed of the subtle and real idea of the sphere of nothingness. In this way, too, one idea arises due to training and another idea ceases due to training.

So from the time, Poṭṭhapāda, that the monk perceives his own (inner states), moving gradually from one stage to another, he experiences the peak of perception.[475] To him who stays on the peak of perception, this (thought) occurs: 'It is worse for me to go on mentally intending. It is better for me if I were not to mentally intend. If I were to intend and make volitional constructions, these ideas of mine would cease and other gross ideas would arise. Suppose I were not to intend and not to make volitional constructions.' He neither intends nor makes volitional constructions. To him who neither intends nor makes volitional constructions, those ideas themselves cease and other gross ideas do not arise. He touches cessation. In this manner, Poṭṭhapāda, occurs the attainment of the state of clear comprehension of the gradual cessation of higher (levels of) perception.'

Poṭṭhapāda Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.183–184, trans. P.D.P.

Again, by transcending entirely the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a monk enters and abides in the cessation of perception and feeling. And his intoxicating inclinations are destroyed by seeing with wisdom.

Cūḷa-sāropama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.204, trans. P.H.

MAHĀYĀNA

Preparatory meditations

Preparatory meditations, suitable for different character types *M.109*

This passage recommends particular meditation methods as appropriate for people whose character is strong in a particular defilement. The same approach is found in the Theravāda tradition.

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475 *Dīgha-nikāya* I.84 explains that the 'sphere of nothingness' is the 'peak of perception'. It is usually followed by the fourth formless attainment, the 'sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception', prior to entry into the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, but here the intermediary state is omitted.

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The meditation on contemplating the impurity of the body, when taught in the correct way to the correct kind of practitioner, will cause sensual desire for what is impure to subside. Someone who is filled with sensual desire should practise the contemplation of the impurity of the body. Someone who is filled with hatred should practise the meditation on loving kindness, as this will cause their hatred to subside. Someone whose mind is restless should practise mindfulness of breathing, as this will cause their restless thoughts to subside.

Śrāvakabhūmi of Asaṅga's Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra, Taishō vol.30, text 1579, p.462c18–22, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

Not being attached to meditation

M.110 A warning not to be attached to inflated ideas about one's meditation

When the foolish practise meditation, and enjoy the pleasures of meditation, they become inflated with high opinions of themselves, and believe that they have attained the fruits of renunciant practice.

Mahā-ratnakūṭa Sūtra, Taishō vol. 11, text 310, p.180c1, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The radiant mind

M.111 The brightly shining mind

This passage explains that faults such as greed are not an inherent part of the mind, but are temporary obscurations of its natural brightness, arising due to various impermanent negative conditions (cf. Th.124).

Son of good family, take the example of the sun and the moon. If they are obscured by smoke, dust, clouds, fog, an eclipse, or the demon Rāhu,[476] living beings cannot see them. Although they cannot be seen, however, the nature of the sun and the moon is not the same as these five kinds of obscuration. It is like this with the mind. Although, when attachment arises, living beings say that the mind is the same as attachment, the true nature of the mind is not the same as attachment. If a mind which was attached had attachment as its nature, and a mind which was not attached had non-attachment as its nature, then it would not be possible for a mind which was not attached to become attached, or for a mind which was attached to become non-attached. Therefore, son of good family, it is not possible for the bonds of attachment and desire to defile the mind. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas have permanently broken the bonds of attachment. This is what is meant by the liberation of the mind. In dependence upon conditions, the bonds of attachment arise; in dependence upon conditions, the mind can be liberated.

Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 374, ch.32, pp.516c27–517a07, trans D.S.

476 A demon who is said to seize the sun or the moon, causing an eclipse.

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The pure Buddha-nature *M.112*

In these passages, the Buddha says that the natural radiance of the mind is that of the Buddha-nature (see M.12–13).

750. The mind which is clear in its essential nature is the pure Buddha-nature. Living beings grasp at it, but it eludes limitedness and limitlessness.

751. Just as the beautiful colour of the gold present in ore is seen by refining it, living beings see the storehouse consciousness[477] amongst the categories of existence.

756. When dirt is removed from clothing, or when gold is separated from impurities, they are not destroyed, but remain. In the same way, one is not destroyed, but remains, when one is freed from impurities.

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Sagāthakam vv.750–51 and 756,
trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

I teach, Śāriputra, that just as the inconceivable expanse of phenomena is bound by the defilements, but not united with them, living beings are contaminated by non-intrinsic defilements. The nature of the mind is pure, like that of the inconceivable expanse of phenomena.

'Buddha Pronounces the *Sūtra* of Neither Increase Nor Decrease'/
Fo shui bu zeng bu ian jing, *Taishō* vol.16, text 668, p.467c04–c06, trans. D.S.

Meditation on loving kindness and compassion

There have already been described many contemplations encouraging compassion (M.71–3). An associated quality to develop is that of loving kindness.

Loving kindness for all living beings *M.113*

This passage, in praising the deep and pervasive loving kindness of the bodhisattva *as infusing every aspect of the path, is a contemplation for cultivating it.*

Mañjuśrī said, 'Son of good family, if a bodhisattva should regard all living beings in this way,[478] how is he to develop great loving kindness for all living beings?'

Vimalakīrti said, 'Mañjuśrī, when a bodhisattva regards all living beings in this way he reflects, "I should teach the Dharma to all living beings, so that they will understand the Dharma." In this way, he cultivates true loving kindness for all living beings: loving kindness that seeks to help living beings, because it is not based on anything; loving kindness that is tranquil, because it does not grasp at anything; loving kindness that is free from feverish longing, because it is free from defilements; loving kindness that sees things the way they are, because past, present, and future are the same to it; loving kindness

477 The 'storehouse consciousness' is seen as both the store of karmic seeds from the past, and also of pure seeds that represent the potential for awakening. Hence it is equated with the *Tathāgata-garbha*.

478 This extract follows a passage where Vimalakīrti explains to Mañjuśrī that a *bodhisattva* should regard living beings as not really existing (as substantial entities).

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that is free of conflict, because it is not possessed by defilements; loving kindness that is non-dual, because it is neither involved with the internal nor the external; loving kindness that is steadfast, because it is completely firm; loving kindness that is strong, because its intentions are unbreakably strong, like diamond; loving kindness that is pure, because it is pure by its very nature; loving kindness that is the same everywhere, because it is of the same nature as space; the loving kindness of an arhant which defeats its enemies;[479] the loving kindness of a bodhisattva which unceasingly brings living beings to maturity; the loving kindness of a Tathāgata which understands reality;[480] the loving kindness of a Buddha which wakes living beings from sleep;[481] loving kindness that is self-arisen, because it has awakened from itself;[482] loving kindness that is awakened, because it has no preferences; loving kindness that makes no assumptions, because it has got rid of attachment and aversion; loving kindness that is greatly compassionate, because it expounds the Mahāyāna; loving kindness that is unwearying, because it regards everything as empty and devoid of an essential self; loving kindness that gives the gift of the Dharma, because it does not have the closed hand of a teacher who does not wish to share his knowledge; loving kindness that has ethical discipline, because it cares for ethically indisciplined beings; loving kindness that is patiently acceptant, because it protects both self and others; loving kindness that is vigorous, because it carries the burden of all living beings; loving kindness that is meditative, because it does not relish any experience; loving kindness that is wise, because its attainments come at the right time; loving kindness that is skilful in means, because it shows the openings in every situation. Loving kindness that is not hypocritical, because its intentions are completely pure; loving kindness that is not dishonest, because of its sincere intentions; loving kindness that is determined, because it is spotless; loving kindness that is not deceitful, because it is not false; loving kindness that is happiness, because it establishes living beings in the happiness of a Buddha. This, Mañjuśrī, is the great loving kindness of a bodhisattva.'

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.6, section 2, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Recollecting the Buddhas

M.114 Seeing Amitābha and other Buddhas in one's meditation

This passage is from perhaps the earliest text focused on the Buddha Amitābha (see MI.5), and describes how one may see him in meditative visualization.

The Buddha said to Bhadrapāla, 'If one practises in the following way, one will attain a state of meditative concentration in which all

479 One popular etymology of the word *arhant* is 'defeater of enemies' (*ari-han*).

480 The word for 'reality' here is *tathatā*. The word *Tathāgata* can be interpreted as 'one who dwells in reality'.

481 The word *buddha* quite literally means 'one who is awake'.

482 That is, it blossoms from a seed deep within beings.

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the Buddhas of the present will appear before one instantly. A monk, a nun, a layman, or a laywoman who wishes to practise in this way should observe their precepts faultlessly, and dwelling alone in one place, should focus the mind on the Buddha Amitābha, who currently resides to the west. In accordance with what one has been taught, one should also focus one's mind on his realm, which is called Sukhāvati, the 'Realm of Happiness', and which lies beyond a thousand billion Buddha-fields. One should focus one's mind on Amitābha in this way with one-pointed concentration for a day and a night, for seven days and seven nights. After seven days have passed, one will see him. It is like when one is in the midst of a dream, and does not know day from night, or inside from outside, and one can see regardless of darkness or obstructions.

A bodhisattva should focus his mind on Amitābha in this way, Bhadrapāla. Then his vision will penetrate all of the intervening Buddha-fields, mountains, even Mount Sumeru, and all dark and shadowy places, and they will not obstruct his vision. He will see clearly without being in possession of the divine eye. He will hear clearly without being in possession of the divine ear. He will travel to that Buddha-field without being in possession of supernormal powers. He does not die here in order to be reborn there, but sees what is there whilst remaining here. ...

One will be reborn there by concentrating one's mind completely on the Buddha Amitābha. One should always focus one's mind on his thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics, blazing their glory throughout a hundred million world-systems, unmatched in their beauty. ...

Therefore, Bhadrapāla, those who wish to see all of the Buddhas of the present throughout the ten directions should focus their minds on the dwelling-places of the Buddhas, with one-pointed concentration, not becoming distracted by other thoughts. If they do this, they will be able to see them. It is like someone who has travelled to a distant country who focuses his mind on his own village, his family and his relatives. Such a person might dream that he had returned to his own village, seen his family and his relatives, and was happy to be able to talk to them again. When he wakes up, he will be able to relate what he has experienced.'

The Buddha said, 'A bodhisattva who hears the name of a Buddha and wishes to see him should focus his mind constantly on that Buddha's dwelling-place, and he will see him. ... bodhisattvas who dwell in meditative concentration in this way, through the great supernormal powers of the Buddhas, will be able to see whatever Buddhas they wish. How are they able to do this? They are able to do this through the power of the Buddhas, the power of meditative concentration, and the power of the virtues they have developed in themselves. They are able to see the Buddhas because of these three factors.

It is like a handsome, well-dressed young man who wants to see himself. He might look in a mirror, sesame oil, or pure, clear water, and see his reflection there. Does the image enter the mirror, the sesame oil, or the pure, clear water from outside?'

Bhadrapāla replied, 'It does not, god of the gods. He sees the image

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because of the clarity of the mirror, the sesame oil, or the pure water. The image does not come from the mirror, the oil, or the water, and neither does it enter them from the outside.'

The Buddha said, 'Excellent, Bhadrapāla. Because the material is pure and clear, what it shows is pure and clear. If one wishes to see a Buddha, one will see a Buddha, one will be able to ask him questions, and one will receive a reply. When one hears the teachings, one will be filled with joy, and think, "Where has this Buddha come from? Where have I travelled to? I have focused my mind on this Buddha, yet he has not come from anywhere, and I have not travelled anywhere. In the same way, if I focus my mind on the realm of sensual desire, the realm of pure form, or the formless realm, I create these realms with my mind. I see whatever I focus my mind upon. The mind creates a Buddha. The mind sees itself. This mind is the Buddha-mind. This Buddha-mind is my body.'

Pratyutpanna Buddha Saṃmukhāvasthita Samādhi Sūtra, Taishō vol. 13, text 417, ch.2 extract, p.899a9–20, b01–03, b08–14, b16–b29, trans. D.S.

Mindfulness

M.115 **Eight contemplations**

This passage concerns the contemplations of: impermanence, sensual desire as leading to suffering, human discontent, the problems of laziness, spiritual ignorance as causing rebirth, the need to relieve poverty, sensual desire as problematic, and the need to help living beings who are suffering.

A disciple of the Buddha should constantly, day and night, reflect with a concentrated mind upon the following eight realisations of great men.

The first realisation is that the world is impermanent. Countries can always break apart. The four great elements are painful and empty. The five categories of existence have no essential self. Everything is changing, constantly evolving, deceptive and unowned. The mind is the source of unwholesomeness. The body is a collection of unwholesome deeds. Reflecting in this way will gradually lead one to liberation from saṃsāra.

The second realisation is that great sensual desire leads to suffering. The weariness of saṃsāra arises from attachment and sensual desire. If one has few desires, one's body and mind will be at ease.

The third realisation is that mind cannot be satisfied. It always wants more and more, and grows in unwholesomeness. A bodhisattva is different, being one who is always satisfied, content with little, practising the path. Their only business is wisdom.

The fourth realisation is that laziness leads one to fall into the lower realms. One should make a constant effort to eliminate the unwholesome defilements, defeating the four Māras, getting away from the prison of the elements and the categories of existence.

The fifth realisation is that saṃsāra consists of ignorance. A bodhisattva constantly bears in mind everything he has learned, and everything he has heard, which is a great deal. He develops perfect wisdom and has eloquence, instructing all beings in great bliss.

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The sixth realisation is that the more one resents one's poverty, the more one is bound to the unwholesome. Knowing this, a bodhisattva practises generosity, not discriminating between those who treat him badly, and those who are close to him. He does not think about the wrongs done to him in the past, nor does he bear any ill-will towards those who have wronged him.

The seventh realisation is that the five kinds of sensual pleasure are harmful. If one is a layman, one should never be corrupted by worldly pleasures. One should always be thinking about the three robes, the bowl, and the other requisites of a monk. One's mind should be set upon going forth, undertaking a pure practice of the path, living the spiritual life to its fullest, and developing a mind of compassion for all living beings.

The eighth realisation is that saṃsāra is on fire, and that the defilements are limitless. He sets his mind on the Mahāyāna, and aims to rescue everyone. He takes the place of all living beings, taking immeasurable suffering upon himself, and leading them to great bliss.

These are the eight insights which have been realised by the Buddhas, by the bodhisattvas, by great men. They have made great efforts to practise the path, developed wisdom and compassion, and taken the raft of the Dharma-body to the further shore of nirvana. After this, they have returned to saṃsāra to liberate living beings. By means of these eight insights, they have trained all living beings, awakening them from the suffering of saṃsāra, encouraging them to abandon the five kinds of sensual pleasure, and to develop their minds on the noble path.

If the children of the Buddha constantly bear these eight reflections in mind, they will purify innumerable unwholesome deeds. Their path to awakening will be direct, and they will swiftly attain unsurpassed perfect awakening, bringing saṃsāra to an irrevocable end, dwelling forever in bliss.

'*Sūtra* on the Eight Reflections of Great Men'/*Foshuibadarenjiao jing*, *Taisho* vol. 17, text no 779, pp. 715b6-c2, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Mindfulness of the body *M.116*

This passage is a contemplation primarily of the physical body, but also of the body of all the conditioned processes making up a person.

Friends, this body is impermanent, unstable, unreliable, fragile, weak, decrepit, short-lived, painful, sickly, changeable, and disease-ridden. This is why the learned do not rely on it.

Friends, this body is like a fleck of froth that cannot tolerate any pressure. This body is like a bubble that soon bursts. This body is like a mirage, full of defilements and craving. This body is like the trunk of a banana tree, with no core.[483] Alas, this body is like a restraint, bound with bone and sinew. This body is like an illusion, full of deluded perceptions. This body is like a dream, it sees what is not real. This body is like a hallucination, as it appears as a reflex of previous actions. This body is like an echo, it arises in dependence upon con-

483 Banana trees do not have a proper trunk, but rather a hollow 'pseudo-stem' made of tightly packed sheaths.

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ditions. This body is like a cloud, characterised by a confused mind, and by its eventual dissolution. This body is like a flash of lightning, bursting forth for an instant, ephemeral. This body has no owner, but arises from various different conditions. This body is passive, like the earth. This body has no essential self, like water. This body has no life force, like a flame. This body has no personhood, like the wind. This body has no essential nature, like space. This body has no origin, but is a coalescence the four great elements. This body is empty, without an essential self of its own. This body is inanimate, like a blade of grass, a piece of wood, a wall, a lump of clay, or a hallucination. This body is inactive, turning like a windmill. This body is worthless, a collection of putrid and foul-smelling substances. This body is insignificant; it wears out and is destroyed, falling to pieces and being scattered like dust. This body is afflicted by the four hundred and four different kinds of disease. This body is like an ancient, dried-up well, constantly succumbing to old age. Alas, this body meets its end, culminating in death. This body, which consists of the categories of existence, the elements, and the sense-bases, is like a killer, a poisonous snake, an empty village.

You should therefore turn away from the body, which is like this, and cultivate dispassion towards it, cultivating instead a longing for the Tathāgata-body.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.2, sections 8–11, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Calm (*śamatha*) meditation and the four deep meditative absorptions

The cultivation of śamatha *in deep meditative absorptions, based on strong concentration and mindfulness, is seen as an important way to train the mind and support the cultivation of wisdom. Meditation and wisdom are the last two of the six* bodhisattva *perfections.*

M.117 The benefits of meditative absorption

This passages describes the meditative absorptions (see Th.140) as greatly aiding spiritual progress, but warns against being attached to them and the heavenly rebirths they can lead to.

If a bodhisattva wishes to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening, he should first enter the first meditative absorption. When he has done this, he should reflect, 'Since the beginning of saṃsāra, I have attained this absorption again and again. I have done what should be done, attaining tranquillity of body and mind. I have gained a great deal of benefit from this absorption. I should now dwell in this absorption again, and do what should be done. This is the basis for all beneficial karma.' When he has done this, he should ... [enter the second, the third and the fourth absorptions, reflecting in the same way.]

Moreover, Śāriputra, none of the bodhisattvas, the great beings in the assembly of bodhisattvas could, without being grounded in the fourth absorption, enter the right path which assures liberation, understand reality, or abandon the state of ordinary beings. No bodhisattvas, great beings, could, without being grounded in the fourth

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absorption, and in the path, generate vajra-like meditative concentration,[484] completely eliminate all intoxicating inclinations, and attain the knowledge of a Buddha. ... For this reason, a bodhisattva, a great being in the assembly of bodhisattvas should enter the fourth absorption again and again. ... He should not, though, indulge in the pleasure of the fourth absorption or of the wondrous rebirths it can lead to.

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol.7, text 220, pp.1055c11–28, 1056a11– 21, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Meditative seclusion should not cut one off from others *M.118*

This passage urges that meditation should not cut one off from ordinary people and their needs.

Śāriputra, you should withdraw to meditate, in such a way that neither body nor mind appear in the triple world.[485] You should withdraw to meditate, in such a way that you do not return to the world from the cessation of perception and feeling, but are still able to manifest all forms of conduct. You should withdraw to meditate, in such a way that you do not abandon the characteristics of attainment, but are still able to manifest the characteristics of ordinary beings. You should withdraw to meditate, in such a way that your mind neither become fixed on the internal, nor wanders towards the external. You should withdraw to meditate, in such a way that you manifest the thirty-seven practices which help one to attain awakening,[486] without deviating towards any views. You should withdraw to meditate, in such a way that you do not abandon the realm of saṃsāra or the defilements, but are still united with nirvana.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.3, section 3, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Practising the five spiritual practices *M.119*

This passage is from an influential meditation guide written by Zhiyi (Chih-I, 539-97), founder of the Chinese Tiantai (T'ien-t'ai) school. It concerns the proper preparation for meditation and the attainment of the first meditative absorption.

Even if the preceding twenty practices are performed fully, one will not experience calm if one is not happy, if one does not yearn for it, if one does not conscientiously discipline one's body and mind, if one is not mindful of one's perceptions, if one does not apply skill in means, and if one does not establish one's mind in one-pointed concentration. One will be able to make progress if one is able to enjoy one's practice with no resistance, if one is able to practise tirelessly day and night, if one is able to maintain constant mindfulness, if one is able to properly understand the goal, and if one keeps one's mind established in one-pointed concentration, without wavering. One-pointed concentration is like the rudder of a ship. Astute wisdom is like the bow, and the other three are like the oars. If one of these things is missing, the ship will not be able to function. It is also like a bird which looks with its eyes,

484 I.e. one which is as firm and sharp as diamond.
485 That is, the entirety of conditioned existence: see 'three realms' in Glossary.
486 See note to M.10.

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steers with its tail, and propels itself forward with its wings. Without these five practices, it will be difficult to meditate, let alone attain meditative concentration. ...

'Great Calm and Insight'/*Mo-ho Zhi-Guan* of Zhiyi, ch.6, section on The Twenty-Five Preliminary Ways and Means for Observation of the Mind, *Taishō* Vol.46, text 1911, p.48a15–22, b02–04, 11–13, 17–18, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

M.120 The practice of deep calm

This passage describes a deep phase of the practice of śamatha *('calm' meditative concentration), Chinese* zhi *('cessation' or 'stopping'), after initially stilling the mind and developing preliminary insight. It concerns attunement to the deep nature of the mind.*

Someone who wishes to practise calm should dwell in a quiet place, crossing the legs, and straightening the body. They should establish the mind in the proper way, not focusing on the air of the breath, nor on empty space, nor on earth, water, fire, or wind, nor on what is seen, heard, perceived, or known. All speculative thought and concepts should be removed. Even the thought of removing is to be removed. Phenomena neither appear nor disappear, as they have no characteristics. His mind, which was previously dependent on the objective field, should be removed from the objective field. Subsequently, his thought, which is dependent on the mind, should be removed from the mind. If the mind chases after external objects, it must become absorbed in the internal mind. If the mind becomes aroused, then he should not grasp at the characteristics of the mind, as when one is not attached to reality, there is nothing to grasp. If he always practises in this way without interruption, whether he is walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, then he will be able to gradually enter into the meditative concentration of reality, and rid himself of all defilements. In this way, the mind of faith is developed, and before long he will reach the stage of irreversibility. If his mind remains obscured by doubt, uncertainty, harsh thoughts, and a lack of faith, bound by karmic obstructions, arrogance, and laziness, he will not be able to enter into the meditative concentration of reality.

'Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna'/*Dasheng qixinlun* (trans. by Śikṣānanda), *Taishō*, vol. 32, text 1667, p. 590b25-c6, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Insight (*vipaśyanā*) meditation

M.121 The practice of clear observation

This passage describes the practice of vipaśyanā *(insight) meditation, Chinese* guan *('clear observation'), which focuses on the ephemeral nature of the world, and the painful nature of conditioned existence under the sway of spiritual ignorance.*

If one only practises calm, the mind may sink down, and become lazy. One may start to feel an aversion to doing good deeds, and great compassion will be far away. Because of this, one should practise insight at the same time as calm. How should this be done? One should attain insight into the world, seeing that all phenomena appear and disappear

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without interruption. Because they are impermanent, they are painful, and because they are painful, they lack an essential self. One should regard what has happened in the past as being like a dream, what is happening in the present as being like a flash of lightening, and what will happen in the future as being like a cloud which emerges suddenly. One should regard the body and everything associated with it as being impure, replete with worms and tiny creatures mixed with filth and defilements. One should see that the foolish falsely conceive of existence in non-existence. One should see that all phenomena arise on the basis of conditions, that everything is ultimately unsubstantial, like a conjuror's trick. One should see that the ultimate truth is beyond the scope of the mind; it is beyond comparison, indescribable. One should think about living beings, and see that throughout beginningless time, they have all been under the influence of ignorance and have suffered from immeasurable distress of mind and body. One should see that this is the case too in the present, and will be so in the future. Saṃsāra is immeasurable, endless, difficult to escape from, and difficult to cross over. They are stuck there, unable to see things clearly. What great empathy one should have for them!

'Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna'/*Dasheng qixinlun* (trans. by Śikṣānanda), *Taishō*, Vol. 32, text 1667, p. 591a16-b5, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Meditation on the three gateways to liberation *M.122*

This passage focuses on three deep insights: that all phenomena are 'empty' of any inherent nature/inherent existence (their 'emptiness'; see M.137–41), lack any defining characteristic marks (animitta)*, and are not something that should be wished for* (apraṇihita)*.*

Subhūti, the essence of the Mahāyāna of a bodhisattva, a great being, is the three kinds of meditative concentration. What are these three kinds of meditative concentration? When a bodhisattva cultivates the perfection of wisdom, based on the approach of non-attainment, he firstly attains insight into the essential nature of all phenomena, and sees that everything is empty. His mind becomes firmly established in this insight. This is called the gateway to liberation through emptiness, or the meditative concentration of emptiness. ...

Secondly, he attains insight into the essential nature of all phenomena, and sees that everything is empty, and therefore has no characteristics. His mind becomes firmly established in this insight. This is called the gateway to liberation through the freedom from characteristics, or the meditative concentration of freedom from characteristics. ...

Thirdly, he attains insight into the essential nature of all phenomena, and sees that all is empty, and therefore has no aspirations. His mind becomes firmly established in this insight. This is called the gateway to liberation through freedom from aspirations, or meditative concentration of freedom from aspirations.

Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Taishō vol.5, text 220, p.300b12-23; cf. vol.8, text 223, p.254c13–19, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

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M.123 Seated meditation and clear insight into the true spiritual aspect of reality

In this passage, Zhiyi of the Tiantai school describes how one should observe the mind so as to understand its true nature.

The practitioner has already practised the path by reciting sūtras. He should sit down on a string bed, neatly adjust his clothes, and sit with his body erect. He should breathe calmly, and relax his body and mind, as described in the section on 'Prerequisites for Meditation'. He should then be mindful of genuine insight, and cut himself off from his previous unwholesome actions.

What is clear and genuine insight? As in the Dharma of the bodhisattva, the practitioner is not released from the defilements, nor does he remain in the sea of defilements. He gains insight into the emptiness of all phenomena, and sees them as they really are. This is genuine insight.

What is insight into the emptiness of all phenomena? The practitioner should carefully cultivate insight into each thought as it arises, and into the distorted mind that accompanies it. ... He searches for his mind amongst the various different kinds of causes and conditions, but cannot find it. The mind is like a dream. It is not real. It is calm, like space. It has no name and no characteristics, and it cannot be conceptualised.

At this time, the practitioner does not see that his mind is saṃsāra. How could he see that it is nirvana? As he has not attained this insight, he cannot preserve it. He does not attain anything. He does not give anything up. He does not rely on anything. He is not attached to anything. No thoughts arise in his mind, and he is tranquil. He does not dwell in this tranquillity, though. This is ineffable. It cannot be put into words.

Although he does not find any characteristic of mind or no-mind, he nonetheless understands the teaching of mind and no-mind. Absolutely everything is like an illusion. ...

All delusions and distortions, which create all phenomena – unwholesome actions as well as good fortune – arise from the mind. Outside of the mind, there are no unwholesome actions or any good fortune. Indeed, there are no phenomena. If the practitioner has insight into the mind and no-mind, he will see that unwholesome actions and good fortune have no owner. When he understands that unwholesome actions and good fortune are empty of inherent existence, he sees that all phenomena are empty. When he has developed insight in this way, he is able to break down all of the distortions of saṃsāra, the three poisons, delusion, and the heaviest kinds of unwholesome actions.

There is then nothing to break down. Body and mind are purified, and in his awareness all phenomena are illuminated. He does not have the slightest perception of or attachment to the eighteen elements or the five categories of existence. Because of this, he attains meditative concentration. Because of his meditative concentration, he sees Samantabhadra[487] and the Buddhas of the ten directions lay their hands upon his head[488] and teach him the Dharma.

487 See M.107.

488 A custom indicating that one is being taught the Dharma.

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'Confessional *Samādhi* of the *Lotus Sūtra*'/*Fa-hua San-mei Chan-yi*, by Zhiyi, section 10, *Taishō* vol.46, text 954, p.a10–15, a20–26, b01–07, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

Chan/Zen meditation

In East Asia, the school which has most emphasized meditation is known as Chan in China (Thien in Vietnam, Seon in Korea, Zen in Japan): see MI.6.

How to sit in meditation[489] *M.124*

This passage comes from Changlu Zongze (d. 1107?), who was a very influential Chan master. His 'Manual for Seated Meditation Practice' has been popular among practitioners as a standard in China and Korea.

A learned bodhisattva should begin by cultivating a mind filled with great compassion. He should make a great vow to cultivate perfect meditative concentration, and commit himself to saving all living beings, not seeking liberation for himself alone. You should therefore abandon all conditioned things, and give up the incessant affairs of the world. Body and mind should be as one. There should be no gap between movement and stillness. Eat and drink neither too little nor too much. Regulate sleep, being neither overly indulgent nor overly strict.

When you wish to meditate, find somewhere that is peaceful and quiet. Spread out a thick meditation mat, and ensure that your clothes and your belt are not too tight. When everything is properly prepared, sit cross-legged. First, rest your right foot on your left thigh, then rest your left foot on your right thigh. Alternatively, you can sit with legs half-crossed. You left foot should hold your right foot in place. Then rest your right hand on your left foot. Rest your open left palm on top of your open right palm. Bring the tips of your thumbs together so that they support each other. Gently stretch your body forward, and then to the left and to the right to establish good posture. Sit without leaning left or right, forward or back. The lower back and the neck should support each other, so that your body is like a pagoda. However, you should not sit bolt upright, as this can lead a person to become restless, and not calm. Your ears should be aligned with your shoulders, and your nose with your navel. Your tongue should press gently against your palate, and your lips should touch your teeth. Your eyes should be slightly open, so that you do not become drowsy. You may attain a state of meditative concentration, the power of which is unsurpassed. In ancient times, the monks who were the most advanced practitioners of meditation always meditated with their eyes open.[490] Chan Master Fayun Yuantong even scolded those who meditated with their eyes closed, saying that it was as if they were in a dark mountain cave filled with ghosts. The wise see it in this way.

With the body stable and the breath calmed, your should relax your belly. Do not think about good and evil. When a thought arises, you

489 On meditation posture in the Vajrayāna, see note to V.57.

490 Across the different traditions and kinds of Buddhist meditation, the advice on this matter varies, as is suitable for a specific kind of meditation.

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should be aware of it immediately. When you become aware of it, it will dissipate immediately. Dwell for a long time without thinking about conditioned things, and your mind will become integrated. This is the essential art of meditation.

'Manual for Seated Meditation Practice'/*Zuochan yi* (part of Changlu Zongze's 'Pure Regulations for the Chan Preserve'/*Chan-yuan qing-gui*, *Taishō* vol.48, text 2023, p.1047b12–c01

M.125 Seated meditation

This passage gives guidance from the sixth patriarch of Chan Buddhism, Huineng (638-713; M.167), emphasizing that inner purity is not something to be developed or known, but simply exhibited through non-attached awareness.

The Master instructed his followers in this way, 'In this teaching, sitting in meditation does not primarily mean concentrating on the mind, or concentrating on purity, and nor does it mean being motionless. One could say that it means concentrating on the mind, but the mind is essentially illusory. You should understand that the mind is like an illusion, so there is nothing for you to concentrate on.

One could say that it means concentrating on purity, but human nature is essentially pure. However, it is because of illusory thought that reality is obscured. If you get rid of illusory thought, you will see that your own nature is pure. When you rouse your mind to concentrate on purity, the illusion of purity immediately arises. Illusions, though, are not located anywhere, and the one who concentrates is illusory. Purity has no form. You give it a form and then say that this form is the result of the effort you have put into your practice. Someone who views things in this way obscures his own nature and places himself in bondage.

Spiritual friends, when you train yourselves in motionlessness, when you see people, do not focus on their faults, on right or wrong, good or bad. This is when your own nature will become motionless.

Spiritual friends, deluded people may be motionless in body, but whenever they open their mouths, they talk about the strengths and shortcomings of others, their good or bad qualities, and how they do not follow the path. Concentrating on either the mind or on purity is an obstruction on the path.'

The Master instructed his followers in this way, 'Spiritual friends, what does it mean to sit in meditation? Through this Dharma-door, there is no obstruction or hindrance. Externally, the mind is not troubled by good or bad circumstances. This is what sitting means. Internally, one sees the motionlessness of one's own nature. This is what is meant by "meditation".

Spiritual friends, what is meant by meditative absorption and meditative concentration? Being free from characteristics externally is meditative absorption. Being undisturbed internally is meditative concentration.

If you are attached to any external characteristic, then you will be disturbed internally. If there are no external characteristics, there will be no internal disturbance. Your original nature is pure and concentrated. It is only because of looking at objects and thinking about them that you become disturbed. If the mind does not become disturbed when it looks at objects, this is true meditative concentration.

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Spiritual friends, when there are no external characteristics, this is meditation. When there is no internal disturbance, this is meditative absorption. Externally it is meditation and internally it is meditative absorption. That is why it is called meditation and meditative absorption.

It is said in the 'Sūtra on the Precepts of the Bodhisattva': "My original nature is essentially pure."

Spiritual friends, in every moment of awareness, look inside yourselves and see that your own nature is essentially pure. Train yourselves, practise yourself, and you yourself will accomplish the path to Buddhahood.'

'Platform *Sūtra* of the Sixth Patriarch'/*Liuzi-tan jing, Taishō* vol.48, text 2008, section 5, p.353b8–27, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The meditative concentration of one form of conduct *M.126*

This passage, also from Huineng, emphasizes that open non-attachment is the single key to meditation.

The Master said, 'Spiritual friends, you should each purify your minds, and listen to my explanation of the Dharma. If you wish to attain omniscience, you should attain the meditative concentration of one characteristic, and the meditative concentration of one form of conduct.

If you do not hold onto any characteristic, if you do not like or dislike any characteristic, if you do not take hold of or reject any characteristic, if you do not think of gain and loss, success and failure, and so forth, but simply remain peaceful and calm, blending yourselves with emptiness, and dwelling in tranquillity, this is what is known as the meditative concentration of one characteristic.

If your mind is always integrated and clear, whether you are walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, the seat of awakening will not be disturbed, and the pure land will undoubtedly be accomplished. This is what is known as the meditative concentration of one form of conduct.

Anyone who is has attained these two forms of meditative concentration is like the earth when is has been sown with seeds which are well preserved and nurtured, so that they will bear ripe fruit. The meditative concentration of one characteristic, and the meditative concentration of one form of conduct are just like this. This explanation of the Dharma is like the rain which falls at the right time to soak the whole of the great earth. Your Buddha-nature is like seeds which will definitely yield fruit when they are watered by the rain. Anyone who practises this essential teaching which I have given will undoubtedly attain awakening. Anyone who practises according to my instructions will certainly obtain this wondrous fruit.

'Platform *Sūtra* of the Sixth Patriarch'/*Liuzi-tan jing, Taishō* vol.48, text 2008, section 10, p.361a26–c7, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Meditation and wisdom *M.127*

This passage from Huineng emphasizes that meditative concentration and wisdom are two aspects of the same activity, which should be based on attunement to one's 'fundamental mind' or 'self-nature': the Buddha-nature or the pure Buddha-nature. One's mind should be free-flowing and 'straightforward', not attached to or focusing on anything in particular, whether seated in medita-

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tion or moving about in the world. True reality (tathatā) *or suchness is beyond words, and one is attuned to this through 'non-thought', in Chinese* wu-nien *or* wu-xin: *free-flowing, direct, non-conceptual awareness.*

The Master instructed his followers in this way, 'Spiritual friends, this Dharma-door is based on meditative concentration and wisdom. Everyone, do not make the deluded claim that meditative concentration and wisdom are different. In their very being, meditative concentration and wisdom are one thing, not two. Meditative concentration is the substance of wisdom, and wisdom is the functioning of meditative concentration. When wisdom is manifested, meditative concentration is inherent in it, and when meditative concentration is active, wisdom is present in it. If you understand this, then you will train yourselves equally in meditative concentration and in wisdom.

Students of the path, do not claim that meditative concentration and wisdom are separate,[491] with wisdom arising from already existing meditative concentration, or that meditative concentration arises from already existing wisdom. Those who hold this view see things in a dualistic way. Their speech is wholesome, but not their minds, so wisdom and meditative concentration are mere words, and then they are not the same.

If one's speech and one's mind are both wholesome, the inner and the outer are identical. Meditative concentration is the same as wisdom. One is awakened, and acts accordingly, not engaging in disputes. If one engages in disputes about what comes first and what follows, then you are just like those who are deluded, constantly vying to win the argument, ever more attached to themselves and to external objects, and never free from the four states of being.[492]

Spiritual friends, what can meditative concentration and wisdom be compared to? They are like a lamp and the light it gives. Wherever the lamp is, there is light. Wherever there is no lamp, there is darkness. The substance of the light is the lamp, and the light is the functioning of the lamp. Although they have different names, they have the same nature. This teaching on meditative concentration and wisdom is just like this.'

The Master instructed his followers in this way, 'Spiritual friends, the meditative concentration of one form of conduct means always acting with a unified, straightforward mind in all one's movements, whether one is walking, standing, sitting or lying down. The Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra says: "The straightforward mind is the seat of awakening. The straightforward mind is the pure land." Don't act with a distorted mind talking of straightforwardness, speaking about the meditative concentration of one form of conduct but not having straightforward mind. Simply act with a straightforward mind. Don't cling to any phenomenon. The deluded cling to the characteristics of phenomena, and become attached to the meditative concentration of one form of conduct, saying bluntly, "Sitting motionless all the time without allowing wrong thoughts to arise is the meditative concentration of one form of conduct." Someone who sees things in this way is like an inanimate object, and this view obstructs the path for him.

491 Cf. Th.133.

492 Birth, ageing, disease and death.

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Spiritual friends, the path should be open and clear. How does it become obstructed? If the mind did not dwell amongst phenomena, then the path would be open and clear. If one's mind dwells amongst phenomena, one binds oneself. One might claim that it is simply a matter of sitting still and not moving, but Śāriputra sat in seclusion in the forest, and was criticized for this by Vimalakīrti.[493]

Spiritual friends, in setting up your practice you might be instructed to sit down, remain motionless and unagitated, and look into your mind, practising meditative calm and insight. Deluded people, though, because of their misunderstanding, become attached to this, and their practice thus becomes distorted. There are many people like this. They instruct each other to act in this way, and so this misunderstanding has become widespread.'

The Master instructed his followers in this way, 'Spiritual friends, originally, the true teaching did not include the idea of a sudden and a gradual path,[494] but people are either sharp or dull by nature. Deluded people practise gradually. Intelligent people get it right away. There is no difference between the two in terms of their realization of their original mind, their insight into their original nature, but because of this difference, the provisional notions of sudden and gradual awakening have arisen.

Spiritual friends, the main doctrine of the Dharma-door I have explained thus is no-thought; its essence is freedom from characteristics; and its basis is non-abiding. Freedom from characteristics is to abandon the characteristics of characteristics. No-thought is to have no thought of thoughts. Non-abiding is the essential nature of human beings. If one is verbally abused or insulted, criticized or confronted by enemies or relatives, and whether one experiences good or evil, the pleasant or the ugly in the world – one sees all of these experiences as empty, and nurtures no thought of retaliation. One does not think about previous thoughts in every moment of thought. If the previous thought, the present thought, and the coming thought succeed one another without interruption, in such a way that one is thinking in every moment, then one is bound. If one does not dwell amongst phenomena, thinking of them in every moment, then one is unbound. This is why non-abiding is said to be the basis of this Dharma-door.

Spiritual friends, abandoning all external characteristics is what is known as freedom from characteristics. Without characteristics, the essence of phenomena is pure. Their essence is thus said to be free from characteristics.

The mind which remains uncontaminated when it senses objects is said to be non-thinking. When one thinks, one should always remain unattached to sense objects, and not allow thoughts to arise in the field of sense objects. If one stops thinking about everything, all thought will be eliminated. It is a serious error, though, to think that one would then die as soon as a single thought was missing, and be reborn in another state of existence. The followers of the path should reflect on

493 See M.118.

494 In the Mahāyāna, especially Chan, there were different views on whether progress on the path was a matter of gradual cultivation or sudden realization.

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this. If one has not understood the meaning of the Dharma, it is to be expected that one will deceive oneself, but more than that, one might deceive others. If one has not seen one's own delusion, one may criticize the teachings of the Buddha. This is why no-thought is taken as the main doctrine of this Dharma-door.

Spiritual friends, what does it mean to take non-thought as the main doctrine of this Dharma-door? If the insight into one's original nature is simply explained verbally, deluded people will continue giving rise to thoughts in the field of sense objects, and so wrong views will come to arise in the field of thinking. Out of this, all kinds of worldly concerns and fantasies will arise. If one understands the essential nature of things there is no independently extant object whatsoever which one can get hold of. The idea that there is anything to get hold of, such that one could mistakenly talk of good fortune and bad fortune, is said to be a defiled wrong view. This is why non-thought is taken as the main doctrine of this Dharma-door.

Spiritual friends, when we say "non-", what is it that is negated by the "non-"? When we say "thought", what is it that we think of? By "non-" we mean no duality, no wearisome mental defilements. By "thinking" we mean thinking about the nature of reality. Reality is the substance of thought, and thought is the functioning of reality. Reality gives rise to thought. The eye, ear, nose, and tongue cannot do this. Reality has its own nature, and this is why it can give rise to thought. If reality did not exist, then the eye and the ear, forms and sounds would be instantaneously cut off.

Spiritual friends, thought arises because of the nature of reality. Even though the six senses see, hear, perceive and know, they are not defiled by the countless sense objects they encounter, and the nature of reality is always self-existent. It is therefore said in the Sūtra, "Someone who can penetrate the essence of all phenomena does not become agitated in the realm of ultimate truth."'

'Platform *Sūtra* of the Sixth Patriarch'/*Liuzi-tan jing, Taishō* vol.48, text 2008, section 4, p.353c13–354b6, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.128 Inscription on the Mind of Faith

This passage, from the third Chan patriarch Jianzhi Sengcan (d.606), is a classic expression of the Chan ideal of open non-attachment and the unity of all.

The Supreme path is not difficult for those who do not pick and choose. Free yourself from hatred and love,[495] and you will see it clearly.

The slightest deviation is like the distance between the sky and the earth. If you wish to see it right away, do not indulge in likes or dislikes.

The conflict between likes and dislikes is an affliction of the mind. If you do not understand the profound meaning of this, it is pointless to practise meditative calm.

It is perfect, like great emptiness, with nothing missing and nothing superfluous. It is only though grasping and rejection that it ceases to be so.

Do not pursue the conditioned, nor dwell in the patient acceptance

495 I.e. clinging desire, not loving kindness.

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of emptiness. In oneness and sameness, all states of mind dissolve of their own accord.

Even if you stop moving, this stopping is still a kind of movement. You will be trapped between the two. Instead, simply understand oneness.

If you do not get hold of oneness, you will fail to succeed in two ways. By rejecting existence, you will become submerged in existence. By pursuing emptiness, you will turn your back on emptiness.

If you talk a lot, and fret a lot, you will go astray. Stop talking, stop fretting, and nothing will stand in your way.

To understand the meaning, go back to the root. If you chase reflections in a mirror, you will lose sight of realization.

A moment of inner reflection is better than focussing on emptiness.[496] Focussing on emptiness distorts everything; it results from wrong views.

You do not need to seek the truth, just abandon all views. ...

Duality exists because of oneness. Do not even be attached to oneness. When not even a single thought arises, all of the countless phenomena will be completely pure.

No impurities, no phenomena, no arising, no mind: if you follow the subject, the object disappears; if you pursue the object, the subject dissolves.

It is because of subjects that objects are objects. It is because of objects that subjects are subjects.[497] ...

To turn away from the six sources of impurity[498] is to reach perfect awakening. The wise do not act. Fools bind themselves. ...

When you open your eyes, dreams fade away by themselves. When your mind makes no distinctions, all of the countless phenomena are simply as they are. ...

Oneness is everything. Everything is oneness. If you understand this, there's no reason to worry about not achieving your goal.

The mind of faith is non-dual. Non-duality is the mind of faith. It is beyond words and concepts, beyond past, present and future.

'Inscription on the Mind of Faith'/*Xin Xin Ming* of Jianzhi Sengcan, *Taishō* vol.48, text 2010, pp.376b18–377a10, trans. D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA

Giving up distractions

The benefits of staying in solitude *V.55*

This passage recommends solitude as an aid to serious, long-term meditation, once a person has learnt how to meditate.

Unless you give up all diversions, distractions, and go to stay in a

496 As a concept, especially if equated with nothingness. On 'emptiness' in the Mahāyāna, see M.137–38.

497 Cf. M.142–43.

498 The six qualities produced by the interaction of the senses and sense objects: sight, sound, smell, hearing, taste, touch, and ideas.

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solitary place, you cannot develop meditative absorption. So it is crucial, as a first step, to get rid of distractions.

Consider the following: 'Whatever has come together will surely fall apart. Parents, brothers and sisters, spouses, friends and relatives – even the flesh and bones of the body that were born together – are going to separate. What is the use of clinging to our loved ones who are impermanent? I should always stay alone.' As Repa Shiwa Ö[499] has said, 'Being alone with oneself is being the Buddha. Although Dharma-friends may support my spiritual practice, having more than three or four gives rise to attraction and aversion, so I shall rather stay alone.'

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.401–02, trans. T.A.

V.56 Abandoning worldly activities, and prizing solitude

This passage is again directed at very serious meditators, who greatly benefit from practice in seclusion. Tibet has always been famous for its great number of yogis living in remote mountain hermitages. While most people do not have the opportunity to live like this, it is good to take opportunities to do so for a period, such as on a meditation retreat.

Occupations such as trade, farming, industry, and science keep you distracted (from practising the Dharma) by many engagements and things to do. They are mundane diversions constantly keeping you busy while not having much (spiritual) significance. No matter how much you strive (in life), you never find fulfilment; overcoming your rivals and supporting your family members becomes a never-ending preoccupation.

Leave behind all those endless activities and distractions like your spittle in the dust! Leave your homeland behind and embrace the world as your own. Live among bare rocks and make friends with wild animals. Deny comfort to your body-mind – let go of your need for food, clothing, and conversation. Spend your whole life in an uninhabited, empty valley.

As the revered Milarepa has said, 'In a rocky cave of a desolate valley, where my loneliness is never dispelled, I am constantly yearning for the Master, (embodiment of) the Buddhas of the three times.' As the saying goes, 'In a place of loneliness, concentration naturally arises.' If you stay in solitude like that, then all good qualities of the path – such as renunciation (of the world) and disillusionment with it, faith and pure perception, meditative absorption and concentration – will arise on their own accord. Try as best you can to live in such a place.

Secluded spots in the forest are the places where the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past have also found their peace. In such places, without any (chance for) diversion or distraction, without trading or farming; where, without nagging companions, you can live happily in the company of birds and wild animals; where water and plants provide ascetic nourishment; where awareness clears up by itself and meditative absorption naturally expands, with neither enemies nor friends you become freed from the bondage of attraction and repulsion. Even visiting such a place has many beneficial effects, not to men-

499 One of the main disciples of Milarepa

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tion actually staying there! In 'The Moon Lamp Sūtra' – among others – the Buddha has said that even the intention to go to a solitary place, or taking seven steps towards it has more karmic benefit than making offerings to all the Buddhas in the ten directions for as many eons as there are grains of sand in the Ganges.

It is also said that 'in a mountain hermitage, a supreme place of seclusion, whatever one does is always good.' According to this, the good qualities of the path – such as renunciation and disillusionment, loving kindness and compassion – develop quite naturally by themselves in a place like that, even though one may not make any deliberate effort to accomplish them. Thus everything one does there can only ever be wholesome. All your attractions, aversions, and other defilements that you had not been able to control whilst living among diversions will diminish naturally once you go to a secluded place, and it will be easy to develop the good qualities of the path.

As preliminary steps towards developing meditative absorption, these points are absolutely crucial and indispensable.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.406–08, trans. T.A.

Meditative concentration

Three stages in the development of meditative concentration *V.57*

This passage concerns the kinds of meditative concentration.

There are three stages in the development of meditative concentration: childish concentration, reality-discerning concentration, and the Tathāgata's wholesome concentration.

While one is clinging to meditative experiences of bliss, clarity, and non-conceptuality, and deliberately seeking them one meditates full of expectation, one is still on the stage of childish concentration.

When one has abandoned clinging to meditative experiences, and even though no longer fascinated by concentration, one still clings to the perception of emptiness as an antidote (for the defilements), that is called the stage of reality-discerning concentration.

When one no longer clings to emptiness as an antidote and still remains in non-conceptual meditative concentration (focused) on the nature of reality, that is called the Tathāgata's wholesome concentration.

Whenever you practise meditative concentration, you should apply the seven point posture of Vairocana – your eyes maintaining the appropriate gaze, and so forth.[500] As it is said, 'When the body is straight,

500 The seven points of the ideal meditative posture are: legs crossed in the *vajra* posture (with both feet on the thighs), back straight, hands in the gesture of meditation (right hand on left palm, thumbs slightly touching), eyes gazing down about 1.5 metres ahead without focus, chin slightly tucked in, shoulders well apart 'like a vulture's wings', and the tip of the tongue touching the palate. (In some other forms of meditation in Buddhism, the eyes are closed). See M.124 for meditation posture in Chan/Zen.

501 The Vajrayāna talks of certain energies (*prāṇa*) as passing along channels (*nāḍī*) down the centre of the back, connecting seven energy-centres (*cakra*).

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the channels are straight; when the channels are straight, the energies[501] are straight; and when the energies are straight, the mind is straight.' So if you straighten up your body without reclining or leaning against anything, your mind becomes free of concepts and you can maintain meditative equipoise without thinking of anything. That is the definition of the perfection of meditative concentration.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.408–09, trans. T.A.

Meditative antidotes for the various defilements

V.58 Listing the antidotes

This passage and the next six are from the sixteenth chapter of Gampopa's 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', dealing with 'Meditative Concentration'. Staying in solitude, avoiding physical disturbance, and having separated one's mind from discursive thoughts, one starts to contemplate the antidotes for the mental defilements*/afflictions: lust, hatred, delusion, envy and self-centredness.*

When you are no longer distracted, you become concentrated. Then, in order to refine your mind, you should investigate which is your predominant affliction and contemplate the antidote for it. (1) The antidote for lust is meditation on the unlovely. (2) The antidote for hatred is meditation on loving kindness. (3) The antidote for delusion is meditation on dependent arising. (4) The antidote for envy is meditation on the equality of oneself and others. (5) The antidote for self-centredness is meditation on exchanging oneself and others. (6) If your defilements are equally strong or if you have too much thought, then you should meditate on the breath.

V.59 The antidote for lust: meditation on the unlovely aspects of the body

This passage describes meditations that are also one of those described in Th.138, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

(1) If you are dominated by lust, then you should meditate on the unlovely, which is done in the following way: First, consider the thought that this body of yours is composed of thirty-six impure substances – flesh, blood, skin, bone, marrow, lymph, bile, phlegm, mucus, excrement, and so forth. Then go to the charnel ground and when you see a corpse taken there: one day after death, and also two, three, four or five days after death, showing signs of decay, turning bluish, turning black, infested by worms, then draw the conclusion: 'This body of mine is also like that, it is subject to that, it never escapes that reality.' Also, when you see a corpse taken to the charnel ground reduced to a mere skeleton with just a little flesh and ligaments remaining, and then the skeleton falling apart into smaller and smaller pieces, and several years after death the bones taking on the colour of a conch shell, and then the colour of dust, then draw the conclusion: 'This body of mine is also like that, it is subject to that, it never escapes that reality.'

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The antidote for hatred: meditation on loving kindness *V.60*

(2) If you are dominated by hatred, then meditate on loving kindness as its antidote. Loving kindness, as I explained earlier,[502] is of three types. Here, we are talking about loving kindness with reference to sentient beings, where you initially think about benefitting and making happy someone who is dear to you and develop loving kindness with regard to that person. After that, do the same toward acquaintances, then toward your neighbours, and then toward those living in your town. Finally, meditate in the same way toward all sentient beings in the East and then the rest of the ten directions, too.

The antidote for delusion: meditation on dependent arising *V.61*

This introduces a contemplation which is explained in the continuation of the passage V.74.

(3) If you are dominated by delusion, then meditate on dependent arising[503] as its antidote. ...

The antidote for envy: meditation on the equality of self and others *V.62*

(4) If you are dominated by envy, then meditate on the equality of yourself and others as its antidote. Just as you want happiness, other sentient beings also want happiness. Just as you do not want pain, other sentient beings also do not want pain. Therefore, practise the meditation of cherishing yourself and other sentient beings equally.[504] That is what (Śāntideva) says in his 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening': 'First of all, I should meditate fervently on the equality of myself and others. Being equal in our pains and pleasures, I should protect all beings as I do myself' (BCA VIII.90).

The antidote for pride: meditation on exchanging oneself and others *V.63*

(5) If you are dominated by pride, then meditate on exchanging yourself and others as its antidote. Childish sentient beings cherish themselves only, and since they work for their own benefit, they suffer in saṃsāra. The Buddhas cherish others, and since they work for the benefit of others, they attain Buddhahood. As it is said: 'The childish work for their own benefit, the Buddhas work for others' benefit – just look at the difference between them!' (BCA VIII.130). Knowing therefore mere self-cherishing as a fault, give up self-grasping. Knowing that cherishing others is a good quality, treat others as yourself. 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening' says: 'Seeing the fault in cherishing just myself, and the great value of cherishing others, may I abandon clinging to my own self, and accustom myself to favouring others!' (BCA VIII.113).

502 See V.66.
503 See Th.156ff.
504 Cf. Th.104.

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V.64 The antidote for too much discursive thought: meditation on the breath

(6) If you are dominated by defilements of equal strength or much discursive thought, then practise with the breath. Meditate in six stages: counting, following and so forth. As the *Treasury of Abhidharma* (the *Abhidharmakośa* by Vasubandhu) says, 'there are six stages: counting, following, stabilizing, examining, transforming, and fully purifying the breath.'[505]

V.58 to 64 are from 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.255–62, trans. T.A.

Meditation on the four limitless qualities

These are loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and impartiality or equanimity. Some similar ideas to what is said below are also found in the Theravāda text known as the Visuddhimagga *(Path of Purification), chapter IX.*

V.65 Meditation on impartiality

Training the mind through the four limitless qualities involves meditation on immeasurable loving kindness, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable empathetic joy and immeasurable impartiality. Although the list usually starts with loving kindness, when we talk about training the mind through practising them one by one, we have to start with impartiality, because otherwise we would end up with just partial loving kindness, compassion, and empathetic joy, which would not be pure at all. Therefore, we start training the mind with impartiality.

Impartiality means giving up our hatred for enemies and infatuation with friends, and developing a balanced attitude toward all sentient beings, free of attachment to those close to us and aversion for those who are distant. The reason why we are presently so much attached to our parents, family members, and others close to us while we hate and cannot stand our enemies and their followers is that we have not properly examined the situation.

In previous lifetimes, our present enemies may have been our parents who loved us dearly, looked after us affectionately, and helped us in inconceivable ways – while those whom we presently consider our loved ones may also have been our enemies in some previous lives when they did a lot of harm to us. ... Likewise, we can never be certain that those whom we presently consider our enemies are not going to be born as our children, or that our family members will not be born as our enemies.[506] So why allow ourselves to be deceived by the momentary appearance of enemies and loved ones, and accumulate negative karma through attachment and aversion that is going to weigh us down into the depths of the lower realms?

505 See Th.139 on mindfulness of breathing. The stages of 'counting, following' etc. are also used in Theravāda practice. The first counts each breath, or counts off the length of any breath; the second carefully follows the flow of the breath in the body.

506 This has many possible applications, including the arena of conflict between members of different ethnic groups.

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Make up your mind, therefore, to think of all infinite sentient beings as your parents and children,[507] and just like the great beings of the past, see your enemies and friends as equal. First, train yourself in various ways so that those whom you do not like at all may no longer stir up anger and hatred in your mind. Think of them as neutral, ordinary people who are neither helpful nor harmful to you. Then consider that neutral beings have also been innumerable times our parents during beginningless saṃsāra, train your mind and meditate until you feel the same kind of affection for them as for your actual parents in this life. Finally, continue this meditation until you feel the same compassion towards all beings – whether they appear to be hostile, friendly, or neutral – as you do for your own parents.

Without this last step, you may develop some even-mindedness without feeling any compassion or hatred toward either enemies or friends, but that is just dull indifference – neither helpful nor harmful. Immeasurable impartiality is like a banquet given by a wise king. When wise kings offer banquets or feasts, they invite everyone – high or low, powerful or weak, good or bad, excellent or mediocre – without making any distinction whatsoever. Just like them, we should treat all sentient beings throughout space with the same kind of great compassion, train your mind until you feel that kind of impartiality.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.310–11; 314–15, trans. T.A.

Meditation on loving kindness *V.66*

Through meditating on limitless impartiality as described, you come to regard all beings of the three realms[508] with the same great loving kindness. Think of them as parents do of their small children.[509] When they look after them, they do not care about their children's ingratitude or their own hardships, but endeavour physically, verbally, and mentally to make their children feel happy, comfortable, and secure. That is how we should endeavour through our body, speech, and mind to make all sentient beings feel good and happy in various ways both in this lifetime and the future ones. All those sentient beings seek their own happiness and satisfaction – none of them want to feel unhappy and miserable. [510] Yet, not knowing that happiness can only be attained by wholesome action, they revel in the ten unwholesome actions.[511] Thus being engaged in just the opposite of what they wish for, even though they want happiness, they experience only suffering. Meditate again and again on the thought: 'How nice it would be if all these sentient beings were just as happy and fortunate as they wish to be!' Meditate until eventually you wish all sentient beings to be just as happy as you want to be.

Accordingly, you should perform what the sūtras call 'physical, verbal, and mental acts of loving kindness.' Whatever you say or do, you

507 Cf. Th.74 and V.13.
508 That is, all levels of existence, from the lowest hell to the most refined heaven: see 'three realms' in Glossary.
509 See V.13.
510 Cf. Th.104.
511 The opposite of those in V.41.

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should not cause any harm to other beings. Always be loving and kind to them. As 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening' puts it, 'Even as my eyes look upon sentient beings, may they behold them in an honest and loving way' (BCA V.80) ... Physically, whatever you do should be gentle and pleasing, not doing others any harm but intent on helping them. Verbally, whatever you say should be true and pleasant, without disrespecting, disdaining, or insulting others. Mentally, you should want others' benefit from the bottom of your heart, only wishing them happiness without expecting anything in return or trying to impress others by your pleasant speech and behaviour to make them think you are a bodhisattva. Pray again and again in these words: 'May I in all my births, life after life, not hurt even a single hair of another sentient being but always act for their benefit!' ...

Specifically, whatever support you can give physically, verbally, and mentally to your parents or those with sustained illness has inconceivable benefits. The Noble Lord (Atiśa) has said that showing loving kindness to visitors from afar, the chronically ill, and your decrepit parents are similar to meditation on emptiness with a core of compassion. ...

Immeasurable loving kindness is said to be like a mother-bird bringing up her chicks. First she makes a soft and comfortable nest for them, then she covers them with her wings to keep them warm. Doing everything very gently, she takes care of the chicks until they can fly away. That is how we should learn to show loving kindness to all sentient beings of the three realms through our body, speech, and mind.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.315–21, trans. T.A.

V.67 Meditation on compassion

The meditation on compassion consists of thinking about a sentient being suffering from intense pain and wishing them to be free from that painful situation. Imagine a sentient being tormented by severe pain, such as someone thrown into a dark prison and awaiting execution or an animal in the slaughterhouse just about to be butchered to death. Then think about them as someone you love – your mother or child.

When you look upon that being – the dungeon prisoner being led to the scaffold or the lamb being grabbed and tied by the butcher, do not think about them as someone else. Try to put yourself in the place of that suffering being out there, thinking 'What would I do if it was me?' Consider this: 'What can I do now? There is nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, no refuge and no protection. I cannot escape, I cannot fly away, I cannot resist by force – I am going to part from the whole world of this life in this very moment. Alas! I must leave behind even this cherished body of mine and set out on the road leading to my next life. How terrible!' Train your mind by taking their suffering upon yourself in this way.

Then again, when you look at that lamb being led to the slaughter, do not think of it as a lamb but instead imagine strongly that it is your own old mother who is being treated this way. 'If it was my old mother, what would I do? If somebody were to kill my innocent old mother like that, what should I do? What terrible anguish my poor mother must be going through!' Try to take upon your own heart the pain she must

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feel. As soon as you experience a wish and an affectionate yearning to free your old mother from the pain of being butchered on the spot, remind yourself that although it is not your present parent who is having that pain right now, she must have been one of your parents in a former lifetime. When she was your mother or father, she must have taken care of you with just the same great kindness as your present parents have, so there is actually no difference between them. 'It is so heart-breaking to see my parents suffering so badly! If only I could free them from this pain right now, quickly, in this very moment!' Meditate in this way until you feel such an unbearably deep compassion that you burst into tears.

When your compassion for them is aroused, reflect on the fact that their pain results from their former wrongdoings and everybody who is presently indulging in unwholesome actions will definitely have to go through similar pain.[512] With this thought in mind, meditate on compassion for murderers, and all those who are busy creating the causes of pain. Then think about the painful suffering of sentient beings that are born in the hells, among the hungry ghosts, or in the animal realm. Put yourself into their place, think of them as your parents, and repeat the previous steps. Try to develop compassion for them, too.

Finally, think of all sentient beings in the three realms. 'Wherever there is space there are sentient beings, wherever sentient beings are, there is wrongdoing and pain, and these sentient beings involved in wrongdoing and pain are worthy of compassion. If only every sentient being would be free from their karmically experienced pain and its latencies, and attain the enduring happiness of perfectly awakened Buddhahood!' Mediate on this wish from the bottom of your heart.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.321–14, trans. T.A.

Meditation on empathetic joy *V.68*

This passage is on the cultivation of joy at the happiness, success and good qualities of others. Being unhappy because others are happy just adds to the misery of the world!

Think about someone of noble birth, wealthy and powerful, living a long, happy and comfortable life in one of the higher realms, having many servants and resources. Then, without any feeling of rivalry or jealousy, make the wish that they might enjoy even more of the splendour of the higher realms, may they be free from harm and obtain many excellent qualities – such as great wisdom. Meditate again and again on the thought: 'I would be so joyful if all other sentient beings could also live their lives in similar circumstances!'

When you meditate on empathetic joy, first think of a close relative or friend you find it easy to empathize with; imagine him or her having all good qualities, a comfortable and happy life, and feel happy about it. When you have established that feeling, meditate in the same way about someone neutral. Then think about your enemies who have harmed you, especially those of whom you feel jealous, and uprooting

512 Cf. the different view of Th.68: while unwholesome actions (karma) lead to future suffering, this does not see suffering as only arising due to past karma.

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the negative mentality of envying others' excellent possessions, develop a particular joy about every aspect of their well-being. Finally, rest your mind in a non-conceptual state.

Since empathetic joy is an attitude free from jealousy, you must train your mind in various ways and try everything in order to prevent that negative attitude from taking you over. In particular, princes of the Buddha – bodhisattvas who have made up their minds to benefit sentient beings – are supposed to try to establish all of them in the enduring happiness of Buddhahood and in the temporary well-being of the divine and human realms. So how could they be displeased when sentient beings attain a little bit of karmic benefit or wealth through the power of their own actions? ...

If your mind is contaminated by jealousy, you cannot see any good qualities in others and cannot have even a morsel of faith. If you do not have faith, you will be immune to the compassion and blessing of the Buddhas. ... Constantly dwelling on feelings of jealousy and competitiveness neither brings any profit to you nor any harm to the other person. It leads to a pointless accretion of wrongdoings, so you had better get rid of that negative attitude.

At all times, cultivate empathetic joy in all the good qualities – such as the good family, appearance, wealth, and learning – of others and their favourable conditions. Meditate sincerely in the following way: 'How happy I am that this person has this great quality or wealth! If only he could have even more abundant power, wealth, learning, or any other quality! May he always have everything he wants!' ...

Meditation on the four limitless qualities will inevitably lead to the emergence of an authentic experience of the awakening-mind[513] in your mind. Therefore, cultivate them by all means until you have that experience. To sum up the meaning of the four limitless qualities so that it is easy to understand, it can be summarized as 'good intention'. So you should really just learn to demonstrate good intention at all times and in all circumstances.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.343–47, trans. T.A.

The four mindfulnesses

V.69 The Song of the Four Mindfulnesses

The text is a well-known concise formulation of the path according to the Gelukpa school. The 'Song of the Four Mindfulnesses' (full title: 'Guidance on the View of the Middle Way: Song of the Four Mindfulnesses Showering a Rain of Accomplishments'), authored by Kalsang Gyatso, the Seventh Dalai Lama (1708–1757), condenses the whole path of the sūtra *and* tantra *vehicles into four meditations. The first three types of mindfulness – of one's teacher (guru), the awakening-mind, and one's meditational deity[514] – are treated in one verse each (1–3), while the fourth type – mindfulness of emptiness –is presented in two (4–5).*

513 See Glossary.

514 A focus of contemplation that embodies good qualities that one has a particular potential to develop.

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[1. Mindfulness of the teacher]

On the seat of the immutable union of method (*upāya*) and wisdom sits your gracious teacher who is the essence of all the refuges; a Buddha with complete abandonment and realization.[515]

Forsaking thoughts of criticism, supplicate him with pure perception.

Not letting your mind (wander) loose, place it in a state of devotion and respect.

Never forgetting him for a moment, maintain the state of devoted respect.

[2. Mindfulness of the awakening-mind]

In the painful prison of endless saṃsāra wander the six types of sentient beings bereft of happiness; (these are) your fathers and mothers, who looked after you with kindness (in past lives).

Forsaking attachment and hatred, think of them with love and compassion.

Not letting your mind loose, place it in a state of compassion.

Never forgetting them for a moment, maintain that state of compassion.

[3. Mindfulness of the body as divine]

In the feeling of happiness, the divine mansion of great bliss, abides your own divine body made of pure categories of existence and elements; a meditational deity of the three Buddha-bodies inseparable.[516]

Not conceiving yourself as ordinary, practise dignity and clear appearance.[517]

Not letting your mind loose, place it in a state of profundity and clarity.

Never forgetting it for a moment, keep it in profundity and clarity.

[4-5. Mindfulness of the view of emptiness]

In the maṇḍala of actual and virtual objects of knowledge all is suffused by the space of luminosity, the ultimate truth of the actual nature, which is the inexpressible reality of things as they actually are.

Forsaking mental fabrications, look at their empty clarity;

Not letting your mind loose, let it rest in its ultimate nature.

Never forgetting it for a moment, keep it in its actual nature.

At the cross-roads of the varieties of appearances and the six consciousnesses,[518] a chaotic mess of dualistic phenomena without basis or root is experienced; a magical show full of deception and seduction.

515 That is, someone who has abandoned all defilements needing to be abandoned and realized all truths to be realized. In Vajrayāna, the student is requred to see his spiritual master as the Buddha himself.

516 In tantric meditation, the image of the ordinary body made of flesh and blood is replaced by a 'divine' self-image constituted by the pure categories of existence and elements of a fully perfect Buddha. The 'divine mansion' is the dwelling-place (or *maṇḍala*) of the meditational Buddha-deity, pervaded by a feeling of 'great bliss' experienced in tantric meditation.

517 Assuming the pure identity of the Buddha-deity requires 'divine pride' or dignity and clear perception of the deity's appearance. These are also referred to as 'profundity and clarity'.

518 The six consciousnesses are those of the five physical senses plus mind-based consciousness. The 'cross-roads of appearances and the six consciousnesses' is a metaphor for 'sensory contact' (*sparśa*) of the mind by apparent objects.

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Not thinking they are true, look at their nature of emptiness.
Not letting your mind loose, place it in a state of empty appearance.
Never forgetting it for a moment, keep it in a state of empty appearance.

'The Song of the Four Mindfulnesses', trans. T.A.

Meditation on the nature of mind

V.70 An Introduction to Knowing

This passage is excerpted from 'An Introduction to Knowing: Natural Liberation through Naked Perception' from 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead'. It is attributed to the great Indian siddha *Padmasambhava, the root-guru of the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism, and is one of the key sources on the nature of mind according to the Dzogchen*[519] *tradition. After dismissing the philosophical positions of other schools and listing their different terms for ultimate reality, it introduces non-dual knowledge – in Dzogchen also called 'knowing'* (rig pa[520]) *– as the nature of the present moment.*[521]

EMAHO ! This sole mind[522] which pervades all of saṃsāra and nirvana has been our very nature from the first, yet we have not recognized it. This luminous *knowing* has never been interrupted, yet we have not encountered it. It has been revealing itself in all, yet we have not faced it. All the inconceivable, 84,000 approaches to the Dharma spoken by the Buddhas of the past, present and future have been taught in order to make us recognize just this (knowing). The Victorious Ones have not taught for any other reason than to make us realise just this. Despite the teachings being as unfathomably vast as the sky, it actually takes only three words to introduce one to *knowing*. This direct introduction to the intent of the Victorious Ones without past or future is: THIS IS IT!

KYE HO! (Behold!) Fortunate sons, listen to me! This so-called 'mind' is a great, famous term. Since it has not been understood, has been misunderstood, only partially understood, or has not been understood as it is, an inconceivable variety of tenets came to being. Ordinary individuals do not understand it, and they wander around the six states of the three realms,[523] experiencing suffering because they fail to understand the nature of their mind. Disciples and solitary-buddhas claim to understand it (but do so) in just a partial way, as the lack of personal identity[524] – not just as it is, and since they are also bound by their

519 According to Tibetan Buddhism, *Dzogchen* is the natural, primordial state of being, and a body of teachings and meditation practices aimed at realizing that state. *Dzogchen*, 'Great Perfection' or 'Great Completion', is a central teaching of the Nyingmapa school also practised by adherents of other Tibetan Buddhist schools. According to *Dzogchen* literature, *Dzogchen* is the highest and most definitive path to awakening.

520 See second footnote to V.2.

521 For a translation of the entire text, see Gyurme Dorje translation, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, pp.35–57.

522 Not meaning a single 'cosmic mind', but a 'single mind' as a common foundation for the experiences of both *saṃsāra* and nirvana.

523 I.e. all the various kinds of rebirths, from hells to the most refined heavens.

524 I.e. lack of a permanent self: see Th.170–79.

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texts and tenets, they cannot see the luminosity.[525] They are obscured by clinging to dualistic perception, and fall into the mistake of bisecting non-dual reality (into subject and object[526]).

Mādhyamikas are obscured by clinging to the two truths,[527] kriya- and yoga-tantra practitioners by clinging to the ideas of approach and accomplishment,[528] mahā- and anu-yoga practitioners by clinging to the duality of mind and its field,[529] They all wander around in saṃsāra through the approach of rejecting, abandoning, and clinging to (aspects of) their own minds, wherein saṃsāra and nirvana are actually inseparable, and failing to attain non-dual unity, they cannot become Buddhas.

Cut out, therefore, all artificial Dharma-practice, and by this teaching on the self-liberating direct perception of *knowing* realize all phenomena as great self-liberation! Thus in the Great Completion is everything complete. SAMAYĀ *rgya rgya rgya.*[530]

This flickering knowing activity, called 'mind', cannot be identified with any particular existent, and yet it brings into existence all the happiness and suffering of saṃsāra and nirvana. It is defined according to eleven different approaches, and has been given an inconceivable number of names. Some call the nature of the mind 'the nature of the mind'. Some non-Buddhists call it a Self. Disciples call it 'lack of personal identity'. The Mind-only school[531] calls it 'mind'. Some others call it Perfection of Wisdom, or by the name *Sugata-garbha* (Buddha-nature), or *Mahāmudrā* (Great Symbol), or the 'single sphere'[532], or the 'expanse of phenomena'. There are those who call it 'universal background'[533], and some call it 'ordinary mind'.

Now, let me introduce you by a triple way of entry into just this. The past moment of mind has clearly disappeared without a trace, the future one has not yet come to being, and when the present is uncontrived and natural, let this ordinary cognition in its own time gaze directly at itself!

When you look, there is nothing to see but luminosity. It is direct *knowing*, naked and alert; nothing particular, just open, empty space – a non-dual experience of luminosity and emptiness.

It is not permanent, since it is nothing particular. It is not annihilation, for it is clear alertness. It is not a unity, being known and appar-

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525 Though see Th.124.

526 Cf. M.143.

527 To a conceptual differentiation between conventional and ultimate reality.

528 *Kriya-* and *Yoga-tantra* are two classes of 'external *tantra*' – systems of practice structured around the idea of 'approaching' and 'accomplishing' an archetypal Buddha.

529 *Mahā-* and *Anu-yoga* are two higher classes of *tantra*, known as 'internal *tantras*', with *Ati-yoga* or *Dzogchen* being the third and highest. The duality of 'mind and its field' refers to the dichotomy of subject and object.

530 This is the triple seal of *samaya* or tantric commintment to keep secrecy.

531 See M.142–43.

532 'Single sphere' is one of the names given to the nature of mind in the *Upadeśa* class of Great Perfection teachings.

533 The term 'universal background' (Tib. *kun gzhi*, Skt *ālaya:* see footnote to M.113) is also used in the *Dzogchen* tradition for the nature of mind as the 'common foundation' for both *saṃsāra* and nirvana.

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ent as manifold. It is not multiple, because there is one indivisible taste. This is not extraneously derived but is your own intrinsic *knowing*, the actual state of things, to which you have just been introduced.

It has all the three Buddha-bodies as an inseparable unity: That it is nothing particular, its emptiness, is the Dharma-body. The luminous self-expression of emptiness is the Enjoyment-body. And its ceaseless display in and as everything is the Emanation-body. The full unity of these three is the Essence-body itself.[534]

If you want to be introduced by a forceful method into just this, it is nothing but the present moment of *knowing*.

'The Tibetan Book of the Dead', pp.373–81, trans. T.A.

534 See V.2.

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CHAPTER 9

WISDOM

THERAVĀDA

The nature of wisdom

Wisdom (paññā) is, with ethical discipline and meditative concentration, one of the three main aspects of the Buddhist training (section introduction before Th.97). It encompasses the right view and right resolve factors of the path (Th.101), especially the form of right view that goes beyond right belief (Th.100). It guides other aspects of the path, but is only perfected at the end of the path (Aṅguttara-nikāya I.231–232). It needs to be in balance with the faculty of faith (Th.91).

The three kinds of wisdom *Th.143*

This passage explains that paññā, understanding maturing into wisdom, is of three kinds: from heard (or read) teachings, from thinking these through, and from meditative development (see V.71–3).

There are three kinds of wisdom: wisdom based on hearing, wisdom based on reflection, wisdom based on meditative development.

Saṅgīti Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya III.219, trans. P.H.

How to move towards wisdom *Th.144*

A fool who has a sense of his foolishness is to that extent wise; but a fool who thinks he is wise is called a real fool.

Dhammapada 63 trans. P.H.

The three characteristics of phenomena: impermanent, painful, non-Self *Th.145*

This passage succinctly points out that conditioned things are impermanent and hence painful (dukkha), in the sense of bringing (physical or mental) pains, and that everything, even what is unconditioned (nirvana) is not a permanent self or its possession (this latter point will be explored in passages Th.160–69).

All conditioned things are impermanent. ... All conditioned things are painful. ... Everything is non-Self.

Uppāda Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.286, trans. P.H.

The role of wisdom *Th.146*

These passages show that wisdom especially understands things as impermanent, painful and non-Self (see below), and cuts through defilements so as to bring the end of everything that is painful. Wisdom is the highest form of right view (see Th.100).

And what, monks, is the faculty of wisdom? Here, monks, a noble disciple is wise; he possesses wisdom directed to arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of the painful.

Vibhaṅga Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.197, trans. P.H.

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Examination is the distinguishing mark of attention, sire, cutting off is the distinguishing mark of wisdom. ... As, sire, a barley-reaper grasps a handful of barley in the left hand and a sickle in the right and cuts it off with a sickle, even so, sire, does the earnest practitioner of yoga, taking hold of the mind with attention, cut off the defilements with wisdom. ...

Illumination is also a distinguishing mark of wisdom. ... Sire, when wisdom is arising, it dispels the darkness of ignorance, produces the radiance of true knowledge, makes the light of knowing appear, and makes plain the Truths of the Noble Ones.[535] Hence the earnest practitioner of yoga sees with right wisdom 'impermanent' or 'painful' or 'non-Self'.

Milindapañha 32–33 and 39, trans. P.H.

Th.147 Wisdom ends the tangle and stream of defilements

'Tangles within and tangles without. Beings are tangled by tangles. I question Gotama about this: Who disentangles this tangle?'

'A wise person having become established in ethical discipline and cultivating the mind and wisdom, a monk ardent and discreet, disentangles this tangle.

Those for whom attachment and hatred along with ignorance have been expunged, the arahants with intoxicating inclinations destroyed, for them, the tangle is disentangled.'

Jaṭā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.13 <28–29>, trans. P.D.P.

Whatever streams (of defilements) there be in the world, mindfulness is the dam for them. I speak of the restraint of the streams. Wisdom shuts them down.

Ajitamāṇava-pucchā: Sutta-nipāta 1035, trans. P.D.P.

Th.148 Wisdom and ethical discipline purify each other

This passage shows that these qualities aid each other.

'Good Gotama, wisdom is purified by ethical discipline, and ethical discipline is purified by wisdom. Where there is ethical discipline there is wisdom. Wisdom is for the person who possesses ethical discipline, and ethical discipline is for the person who possesses wisdom. Just as, good Gotama, one washes one hand with the other, and one foot with the other, in the same way wisdom is purified by ethical discipline and ethical discipline is purified by wisdom.' ... 'It is quite so brahmin, it is quite so. ... Ethical discipline and wisdom are declared to be the most excellent in the world.

Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.124, trans. P.D.P.

535 See L.27 and Th.149.

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Suffering and the four Truths of the Noble Ones

The Truths of the Noble Ones and how they should be responded to — *Th.149*

This passage is an extract which is the heart of the Buddha's first discourse (L.27). It delineates the central focus of the Buddha's teachings, which he taught only once he was assured that his hearers were mentally prepared to benefit from hearing them. He often did this by first giving a step-by-step discourse (passage Th.28) to get his audience into a calm and open state of mind. The key concept here is dukkha, *often translated simply as 'suffering' (or as 'unsatisfactoriness' or 'stress'). More accurately it means: as a noun, life's various kinds of 'pain', whether these are physical or mental; as an adjective it means 'painful'; as a noun again it then means 'the painful' – all those things that entail mental or physical pain. In the passage below, it is used in the second and third of these senses, except once when referring to physical pain.*

What are usually translated 'Noble Truths' are really realities to see and understand, the most significant dimensions of existence, rather than words which are 'truths'; and the first two (the painful and its cause) are definitely not 'noble'.[536] *Rather, all four are what the 'noble ones' have insight into. These 'noble ones' are the Buddha and those of his disciples* (arahants) *who are enlightened, who are partially enlightened, or are on the brink of their first breakthrough to this (Th.199–201). It is spiritual insight that makes them noble ones, rather than being noble by birth: they are the spiritually ennobled. The first thing to do to become a noble one is to properly identify and understand the four 'truths', in the sense of true realities. While most people would agree, for example, that 'unhappiness and distress' are painful, they would not see being born and the mental and physical processes making up a person as aspects of 'the painful'. To do so requires discerning wisdom.*

This passage emphasizes that the painful needs to be understood, that which originates it (craving) needs to be abandoned, that which is its cessation (the end of craving) needs to be experienced, and the path to this needs to be developed.

Now *this*, monks, is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the painful: birth is painful, ageing is painful, illness is painful, death is painful; sorrow, lamentation, (physical) pain, unhappiness and distress are painful; union with what is disliked is painful; separation from what is liked is painful; not to get what one wants is painful; in brief, the five grasped-at categories of existence[537] are painful.

Now *this*, monks, is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the origin of the painful. It is this craving which leads to repeated existence, accompanied by delight and attachment, seeking delight now here, now there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being (something), craving for (something's) non-existence.

Now *this*, monks, is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of the painful. It is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that

536 On which, see note to L.27.

537 The physical and mental processes making up a person, that one grasps at in vain as being, or being possessed by, a permanent Self: see Th.151

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same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it.[538]

Now *this*, monks, is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful. It is this noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditative concentration.

"This is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the painful": in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light. Now on this, "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the painful – is to be fully understood": in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight, and light. Now on this, "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the painful – has been fully understood": in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light.

(Likewise,) in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light, with respect to: "This is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the origin of the painful", "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the origin of the painful – is to be abandoned", and "This – Truth of the Noble Ones that is the origin of the painful – has been abandoned."

(Likewise,) in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light, with respect to: "This is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of the painful", "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of the painful – is to be personally experienced" and "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of the painful – has been personally experienced".

(Likewise,) in me, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose vision, knowledge, wisdom, insight and light, with respect to: "This is the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful", "This – the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful – is to be developed", and "This the Truth of the Noble Ones that is the way leading to the cessation of the painful – has been developed."

Th.150 Explanation of the painful aspects of existence

This explains and expands on each of the aspects of life that are described above as 'painful'. Note that the illustration of the pain of 'not getting what one wants' is the spiritual frustration of not being free of all the other painful aspects of life! In effect, the painful aspects of life are all those unsatisfactory things that bring distress, unease, dissatisfaction, anxiety, frustration, or stress.

And what is birth? Of whatever beings, of whatever category of beings, there is birth, taking birth, descent (conception), coming-to-be, appearance of (the five) categories of existence and acquisition of the sense-bases: that, monks, is called birth.[539] ...

538 That is: giving up the thirst for the 'next thing', and giving oneself fully to what is here, now; abandoning attachments, past, present or future; freedom that comes from contentment; not relying on craving so that the mind does not settle down in anything, sticking to it, roosting there.

539 On the painful aspects of life in the womb and then leaving it, see V.21.

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And what is pain? Whatever is bodily pain, bodily discomfort, painful uncomfortable feeling born of a stimulus to the body: that is called pain.

And what is unhappiness? Whatever is mental pain, mental discomfort, painful uncomfortable feeling born of a stimulus to the mind: that is called unhappiness.

And what is distress? What, for one touched by whatever painful state when some misfortune is met with, is being troubled, distress, the state of being troubled, the state of being distressed: that is called distress.

And what is the pain of union with what is disliked? Whenever one meets with undesirable, unpleasing, unattractive sights, sounds, smells, flavours, or tactile sensations; or has connection, contact, relationship, interaction with those who wish one ill, who wish for one's harm, who wish for one's discomfort, who wish one no security from the yoke. This is called pain of union with what is disliked.

And what is the pain of separation from what is liked? Whenever one meets with desirable, pleasing, attractive sights, sounds, smells, flavours, or tactile sensations; or one has connection, contact, relationship, interaction with those who wish one well, who wish for one's benefit, who wish for one's comfort, who wish one security from the yoke, or with one's mother, father, brother, sister, friends, companions, or relatives, and then is deprived of that: that is called the pain of separation from what is liked.

And what is the pain of not getting what one wants? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us'. But this is not to be gained by wishing. This is the pain of not getting what one wants. In beings subject to ageing ... illness ... death ... sorrow, lamentation, pain, unhappiness and distress, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to each of these, and may none of them come to us'. But this is not to be achieved by wishing: that is the pain of not getting what one wants.

And how, in short, are the five grasped-at categories of existence painful? These are: material form as a grasped-at category, feeling as a grasped-at category, perception as a grasped-at category, volitional activities form as a grasped-at category, and consciousness form as a grasped-at category. These, in short, are the five grasped-at categories of existence that are painful.

This, for the noble ones, is called the truth that is the painful.

Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.305–307, trans. P.H.

The five categories of existence (*khandhas*) *Th.151*

These two passages explain the nature of the five components of a person that are each a 'category of existence': one of the fundamental types of process making up lived existence. As they are each grasped at to feed the idea of 'I am', they are also known as 'grasped-at categories of existence' (upādāna-kkhandha)*. 'Material form' is the body. 'Feeling' is not meant in the sense of emotion, but is simply the hedonic tone of any experience. 'Perception' is what recognizes, labels, classifies or interprets sense-objects or aspects of them, such as colour, generally doing this quite automatically. 'Volitional/constructing activities' are a plurality of processes, of which the main one is volition. They*

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*have a shaping effect on all the categories of existence – which is probably because volition is the heart of karma (see passage Th.64), and so brings karmic effects. 'Consciousness' is the basic awareness of any object and the discerning of its basic aspects, such as differentiating between tastes. Th.150 describes all five categories of existence as painful (*dukkha*), in the sense of potentially involving or entailing mental or physical suffering, though only some forms of feeling are actual forms of pain/suffering. The second passage here sees the four mental ones as each of six types differentiated by which sense-channel they operate in, with the mental faculty and mental objects (thoughts, memories, ideas, etc.) counted as one such.*

And why, monks, does one call it (material) form? 'It is deformed', monks, therefore it is called form. ... Deformed by cold, by heat, hunger, thirst, contact with flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun and snakes. ...

And why, monks, does one call it feeling? 'It feels', monks, therefore it is called feeling. ... It feels pleasure, it feels pain, and it feels neither-pleasure-nor-pain. ...

And why, monks, does one call it perception? 'It perceives', monks, therefore it is called perception. ... It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, it perceives white. ...

And why, monks, does one call them volitional (or constructing) activities? They construct the conditioned', therefore they are called volitional (or constructing) activities. ... (Material) form is a constructed phenomenon that they construct into the state of (material) form. Feeling is a constructed phenomenon that they construct into the state of feeling. Perception is a constructed phenomenon that they construct into the state of perception. Volitional activities are constructed phenomena that they construct into the state of volitional activities. Consciousness is a constructed phenomenon that they construct into what is meant by consciousness.

And why, monks, does one call it consciousness? 'It discerns', monks, therefore it is called consciousness. ... It discerns sour, it discerns bitter, it discerns pungent, it discerns sweet, it discerns sharp, it discerns mild, it discerns salty, it discerns bland.

Khajjani Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya III.86–87, trans. P.H.

And what, monks, is (material) form? The four great elements (earth/solidity, water/cohesion, fire/heat, and wind/motion) and the form derived from these. ... And what, monks, is feeling? There are these six classes of feeling: feeling born of sensory contact with the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, or the mental faculty ... And what, monks, is perception? There are these six classes of perception: perception of (visual) forms, or of sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects or mind objects. ... And what, monks, are volitional activities? There are these six classes of volition: volitions regarding (visual) forms, or of sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects or mind objects. ... And what, monks, is consciousness? There are these six classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear- consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness.

Upādānaṃ Parivaṭṭam Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya III.59–61, trans. P.H.

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Three kinds of suffering *Th.152*

This passage clarifies the nature of dukkha*: suffering, mental or physical pain, and that which is painful (cf. V.21). The painfulness of life is seen most directly in actual physical or mental pains. There is also painfulness in something's being a limited, ephemeral, conditioned state, imperfect: an implicit contrast to the unconditioned (nirvana); there is also painfulness in something's being pleasant while it lasts but bringing the pain of loss when it ends.*

Sitting on one side, the wandering ascetic Jambukhādaka said to Venerable Sāriputta: 'Friend Sāriputta, it is said "suffering, suffering". What, now, is suffering (*dukkha*)?'

There are, friend, three kinds of painfulness (*dukkhatā*): the painfulness of pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*); the painfulness of conditioned things, and the painfulness of change.

Dukkha Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.259, trans. P.H.

Identifying and understanding the four Truths of the Noble Ones *Th.153*

Meditative concentration helps the mind to develop the discerning wisdom that can properly identify and understand each of the four Truths.

A monk who has meditative concentration understands things as they really are. And what does he understand as they really are? He understands as it really is, 'This is the painful'. He understands as it really is, 'This is the origin of the painful'. He understands as it really is, 'This is the cessation of the painful'. He understands as it really is, 'This is the way leading to the cessation of the painful'.

Samādhi Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.414, trans. P.H.

No pessimistic denial of life's pleasures, but attachment to them is dangerous *Th.154*

These passages makes it clear that Buddhism does not pessimistically deny the pleasant side of life; but it counsels that all such pleasant, beguiling attractions are impermanent, and not to be clung to. Ignoring painful aspects of life leads to limiting attachment, while calmly acknowledging the painful aspects has a purifying, liberating effect.

The pleasure and gladness that arise in dependence on material form: this is its satisfaction. That it is impermanent, painful, and subject to change; this is its danger. The removal and abandonment of desire and attachment for it: this is the escape from it. ... [The same is then said of the other four aspects of a person: feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness.]

Assāda Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya III.27–28, trans. P.H.

If there were to be no satisfaction in the world, living beings would not be attached to the world. Monks, it is because there is satisfaction in the world that living beings are attached to the world. If there were to be no danger in the world, living beings would not be disenchanted with the world. It is because there is danger in the world that living beings are disenchanted with the world. If there were to be no escape from the world, living beings would not escape from the world. It is because there is an escape from the world that living beings escape from the world.

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As long as living beings of the world do not understand truly with higher knowledge the satisfaction in the world as satisfaction, the danger of the world as danger, the escape from the world as escape, so long the living beings of the world – inclusive of gods, māras, brahmās, renunciants, brahmins, inclusive of deities and humans – do not live unyoked, unfettered and freed, with a mind that is unrestricted. Whenever, monks, living beings of the world understand truly with higher knowledge the satisfaction in the world as satisfaction ... the danger ... the escape from the world ... they live unyoked, unfettered and freed, with a mind that is unrestricted.

Assāda Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.260, trans. P.D.P.

Th.155 **The path brings joy**

Buddhism may talk much about pain and suffering, but it should not be thought as dour and pessimistic. For example, joy is experienced in the first two meditative absorptions (see Th.140) and is one of the seven factors of awakening (see end of Th.139), and enlightened disciples express non-attached joy at the beauties of wild nature, as seen in these verses.

Sāriputta:

Forests are delightful, where (most) folk find no delight. Those without attachment will delight there; they are not seekers after sensual pleasures.

Mahā-kassapa:

With clear water and great boulders, frequented by monkeys and deer, covered with moisture and moss, those rocks delight me.

Theragāthā 992 and 1070, trans. P.H.

Dependent arising and how suffering originates

In passage L.27, craving (taṇhā) *is described as the factor which originates the painful aspects of life.* Taṇhā *is not just any kind of 'desire', but demanding desire. On the other hand,* chanda, *the 'desire to do', can have wholesome forms which are part of the Buddhist path. How does craving lead to life's pains? The most obvious way is that it leads to frustration due to 'union with the disliked, separation from the liked, not getting what one wants': the stronger one craves for things to be, or not be, a certain way, the more painful frustration arises when things are not as one demands; and the more things one craves for, the more frustrations one will have. Even when one gets what one wants, things in time change, or one oneself changes and gets bored with what one has. Craving also often drives one into situations which bring dangers or anxieties, and also leads to quarrels, as in passage Th.18.*

Craving 'for being (something)'may be in the form of craving to develop a certain kind of identity, to 'be someone', such as craving for celebrity or power, but at a deeper level is craving for further personal existence after death, hopefully in an eternal form. Like other forms of craving, this is seen to cause another rebirth (whose nature is determined by one's karma), and hence all the pains that this will bring. Craving 'for (something's) non-existence' may be either craving for an unpleasant experience or situation to end, or the suicidal

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urge to end one's existence but this just fuels another rebirth, in which things may be worse than at present.

A fuller analysis of how what is painful originates is given in a central teaching of the Buddha – that on paṭicca-samuppāda*: dependent arising, but also translated as dependent origination and conditioned co-arising. Gaining insight into this is a key role for wisdom. It explains how things can only arise and exist due to supporting conditions that flow together to give rise to them, and so cease when these conditions cease. It can be seen as a principle of causality, or rather conditionality, as applied not only to physical things but also mental ones, to the working of karma and the process of rebirth and its pains, and the process of spiritual development.*

The standard version of dependent arising, as a series of twelve nidānas *or conditioning links, culminating in what is painful* (dukkha)*, is: (1) ignorance -> (2) volitional activities -> (3) consciousness -> (4) mind and body -> (5) the six sense-bases (the five physical senses plus the mind) -> (6) sensory contact ->(7) feeling -> (8) craving -> (9) grasping -> (10) a way of being -> (11) birth (i.e. conception) -> (12) ageing and death and a whole painful bundle of experiences. This sequence may be explained either from link (1) through to (12) or the explanation may start at (12), then specify (11) as its crucial condition, and so on back to (1). After the formula is given in either versions of this forward/arising* (anuloma) *mode, it follows in reverse/cessation* (paṭiloma) *mode. In this form, it describes how the cessation of the painful comes about due to the complete cessation of spiritual ignorance and the consequent cessation of each following link.*

The abstract principle of dependent arising *Th.156*

This expresses the basic principle of conditionality, of one thing as a necessary condition for another,without which it ceases. For example, craving depends on feeling, though as an arahant *has feeling but lacks craving, it is clear that feeling will only lead to craving when ignorance* also *exists (*Visuddhimagga *XVII.105, p.542).*

That being, this comes to be;
from the arising of that, this arises;
that being absent, this is not;
from the cessation of that, this ceases.

Dasa-balā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.28, trans. P.H.

The Buddha on causality *Th.157*

This verse, which came to be inscribed on many monuments, praises the Buddha as teacher of this doctrine.

Of those states that proceed from a cause,
The Tathāgata has told the cause.
And that which is their cessation:
The great renunciant has such a teaching

Mahāvagga I: *Vinaya* I.40, trans. P.H.

Dependent arising and the four Truths of the Noble Ones *Th.158*

The first passage explains that the arising aspect of dependent arising is equivalent to the second Truth of the Noble Ones, that which originates the painful (dukkha)*, while the cessation aspect is equivalent to the third Truth of the*

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Noble Ones, the cessation of the painful. The second passage applies the pattern of the four Truths (x, its origin, its cessation, the way to this) to each of the conditioning links (other than the first).

And what, monks, is the Truth that is the origin of the painful? From ignorance as condition are the volitional activities; from the volitional activities as condition is consciousness; from consciousness as condition is mind and body (the sentient body); from mind and body as condition are the six sense-bases; from the six sense-bases as condition is sensory contact; from sensory contact as condition is feeling; from feeling as condition is craving; from craving as condition is grasping; from grasping as condition is a way of being; from a way of being as condition is birth; from birth as condition is old age and dying, grief, lamentation, physical pain, unhappiness and distress come into being. Such is the origin of this whole bundle of suffering.

And what, monks, is the Truth that is the cessation of the painful? From the fading away without remainder of ignorance is the cessation of the volitional activities; from the cessation of the volitional activities is the cessation of consciousness; [etc., until we come to:] from the cessation of birth, old age and dying, grief, lamentation, physical pain, unhappiness and distress cease. Such is the cessation of this whole bundle of suffering.

Titthāyatana Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.177, trans. P.H.

From the arising of ignorance is the arising of the volitional activities; from the cessation of ignorance is the cessation of the volitional activities. This noble eightfold path is itself the way leading to the cessation of the volitional activities. From the arising of the volitional activities is the arising of the consciousness; from the cessation of the volitional activities is the cessation of consciousness. ...

Paccaya Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.43, trans. P.H.

Th.159 Explanation of the links of dependent arising

This passage explains some of the links.

And what, monks, is grasping? There are these four kinds of grasping: grasping at sensual pleasures, grasping at views, grasping at rules and vows, and grasping at a doctrine of Self. This is called grasping.[540]

... And what, monks, is mind and body (literally, name and form)? Feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention: this is called mind. The four great elements and the form derived from them: this is called body. Thus this mind and this body are together called mind and body.

And what, monks, is consciousness? There are these six kinds of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. This is called consciousness.

540 If craving is the reaching out to certain things, grasping is clinging hold of something. The objects of grasping are: sensual pleasures, dogmatic one-sided views (cf. Th.19), fixed ways of doing things as essential for liberation, and a doctrinal focus on the nature and destiny of a supposed permanent inner Self. Such forms of grasping give one a certain kind of orientation and focus to one's being, so that it crystallizes in a certain way: one forms oneself into a certain kind of being.

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And what, monks, are the volitional activities? There are these three kinds of volitional activities: bodily, verbal and mental volitional activities. These are called the volitional activities.[541]

And what, monks, is ignorance? Not truly knowing the painful, not truly knowing the origination of the painful, not truly knowing the cessation of the painful, not truly knowing the way going to the cessation of the painful. This is called ignorance.[542]

Vibhaṅga Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.3–4, trans. P.H.

What feeds ignorance *Th.160*

This passage explains that ignorance is itself conditioned by the five hindrances (desire for sensual pleasures, ill-will, dullness and lethargy, restlessness and worry, and vacillation, on which, see Th.125–127), and these by misconduct of body, speech and mind. As the latter are unwholesome forms of volitional activities, these can be seen to feed back and nurture the ignorance or lack of direct insight, which is the background condition for both bad actions and the good actions of those who have not yet attained awakening.

Notable among the factors feeding bad conduct is unwise attention: attention to surface impressions. This is the opposite of wise attention (see Th.130)*: probing attention that looks below the superficial appearance of things and seeks to understand the deeper aspects and causes of things.*

Monks, this is said: 'A first point of ignorance is not seen, such that before then there was no ignorance and afterwards it came into being.' Nevertheless, ignorance has a specific condition.

I say, monks, that ignorance has a nutriment: ... the five hindrances. The five hindrances also have a nutriment: ... the three kinds of misconduct (by body, speech and mind). The three kinds of misconduct also have a nutriment: ... non-guarding of the sense faculties. Non-guarding of the sense faculties also has a nutriment: ... lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension. Lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension also has a nutriment: ... unwise attention. Unwise attention also has a nutriment: ... lack of faith.[543] Lack of faith also has a nutriment: ... not hearing the good Dhamma. Not hearing the good Dhamma also has a nutriment: ... not associating with good and wise persons.

Avijjā Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya V.113, trans. P.H.

Consciousness helps spark off and sustains a new life *Th.161*

In passage Th.159 above, it is clear that 'mind and body' stands for the psycho-physical organism (roughly equivalent to the first four of the five categories of existence), the body and mental qualities that bring sentience: the sentient body. The passage below shows that consciousness is a key condition

541 *Saṃyutta-nikāya* II.39–40 see these as equivalent to bodily, verbal or mental volition, and thus to karma, while *Dīgha-nikāya* III.217 says the three volitional activities are karmically beneficial ones, karmically detrimental ones, and 'imperturbable' ones, that lead not to future happiness or suffering but the neutral feelings of the formless rebirths.

542 That is, lack of direct insight into the four Truths of the Noble Ones

543 That is, lack of confidence in wholesome people, practices and teachings.

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for this by facilitating its origin and development in the womb, by the in-flow of a stream of consciousness from a previous rebirth, and continuing to help enliven it in life.

If consciousness were not to descend into the mother's womb, would mind and body become constituted there? 'No, venerable sir.' 'Or if consciousness, having descended into the mother's womb, were to turn aside from there, would mind and body be produced in this present life?' 'No, venerable sir.' And if consciousness of one yet young, boy or girl, were cut off, would mind and body come to growth, development and maturity?' 'No, venerable sir.' 'Therefore, Ānanda, just this, namely consciousness, is the cause, ground, origin and condition of mind and body. ...

Mahā-nidāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.63, trans. P.H.

Th.162 Sensory contact

This passage shows that 'contact' is not a bare meeting of a sense and its object, but also involves consciousness, conscious registration; hence its nature is that of sensory stimulation or the impingement of a sense-object on the mind. A passage at Dīgha-nikāya *II.62 explains that contact has two aspects to it: 'designation-contact' depends on the naming mind, and is the contact resulting from hearing meaningful words or from meaning associated with other objects; 'resistance-contact' depends on material form, and the direct contact of the external material world with the physical senses.*

Eye-consciousness, your reverences, arises conditioned by eye and visual forms; the meeting of the three is contact; from contact as condition is feeling ... [then parallel statements for the other sense-channels are given].

Loka Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.73, trans. P.H.

Th.163 Responses to feeling

While one cannot help what feelings initially arise from sensing something, the extent of craving (and type of accompanying feeling) in response to them is modifiable. People take feeling very seriously, thirsting for the pleasant, trying to push away the unpleasant, and having an attitude of indifference or confusion towards the neutral.

When one is touched by pleasant feeling, if one delights in it, welcomes it, and remains holding on to it, then the underlying tendency to attachment lies within one. When one is touched by painful feeling, if one sorrows, grieves and laments, weeps beating one's breast and becomes distraught, then the underlying tendency to aversion lies within one. When one is touched by neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, if one does not understand it as it really is – the origination, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger, and the transcending in regard to that feeling then the underlying tendency to ignorance lies within one.[544]

Chachakka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.285, trans. P.H.

544 At *Majjhima-nikāya* I.303, it is said that neutral feeling is pleasant when there is understanding of it, but painful when this is lacking (as in boredom).

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The nature of a way of being *Th.164*

This passage explains that there are three 'ways of being' or forms of identity, which relate respectively to: the realm of sensual desire, in which most kinds of beings live, and the elemental form and formless realms, which are both groups of heavens and the meditative states which lead to rebirth in them. These are three ways of being and acting and their leading towards certain kinds of rebirths.

'They say "way of being, way of being"; in what way, venerable sir, is there a way of being?'

'Ānanda, if there were no karma to ripen in the realm of sensual desire, would there be known the sensually desiring way of being?' 'Surely not, venerable sir.' 'Thus, Ānanda, for beings fettered by craving and hindered by ignorance, with karma the field, consciousness the seed, craving the moisture, consciousness is supported in an inferior realm Thus, Ānanda, there is a way of being. ... [This is then repeated for the form and the formless realms and ways of being, which are respectively a middling and a superior realm.]

Bhava Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.223, trans. P.H.

One sees the Dhamma in seeing dependent arising *Th.165*

This passage shows how central the teaching of dependent arising is, as to see it with insight is to see the Dhamma, the Basic Pattern of reality. Within the overall Basic Pattern that is Dhamma, specific basic patterns (dhamma) flow into and nurture each other in complex, but set, regular patterns. They do not exist on their own, but arise in specific ways from the particular cluster of dhammas which sustain them. The passage also shows the connection of the doctrine to that on the four Truths of the Noble Ones.

Now this has been said by the Blessed One, 'Who sees dependent arising sees the Dhamma; who sees the Dhamma sees dependent arising.' And these five grasped-at categories of existence[545] are dependently arisen. The desire for, settling on, inclination towards and holding on to these five grasped-at categories are the origin of the painful. The removal of desire and attachment, the abandonment of desire and attachment for these grasped-at categories is the cessation of the painful.

Mahā-hatthipadopama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.191, trans. P.H.

Dependent arising as profound *Th.166*

This passage emphasizes the profound and hard to see nature of the subject of this teaching (see also Th.13).

After sitting down Ānanda said to the Blessed One: 'It's amazing, sir, it's wonderful, sir, how profound this dependent arising is, and how profound it appears to be. Yet to me it seems so very clear.'

'Don't say so Ānanda. Don't say so. Profound is this dependent arising, and profound it appears to be. It is because of not understanding and not penetrating this teaching that this generation is like a tangled skein, a knotted ball of string, like matted rushes and reeds, and

545 See Th.151.

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does not go beyond the woeful state, the bad destiny, the abyss, the wandering cycle.

Mahā-nidāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.55, trans. P.D.P.

Th.167 Dependent arising as an ongoing regularity discovered by the Buddha

*In this passage, the dependent arising sequence is seen as a reality which a Buddha discovers, then teaches others about. It is a principle of causal regularity, a Basic Pattern (*Dhamma*).*

What monks is dependent arising? Monks, conditioned by birth is decay and death. Whether Tathāgatas are born or Tathāgatas are not born, that element has certainly stayed, the fact that things have stayed (as such), the regularity of phenomena, specific conditionality. The Tathāgata becomes fully awakened to it and fully realizes it. Having become fully awakened and having fully realized, he informs, teaches, lays down, establishes, reveals, analyses, makes it plain and says, 'Look'. [So also with the other connections of the standard formulation of dependent arising.]

Paccaya Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.25, trans. P.D.P.

Th.168 The world as a stream of conditioned processes that lacks substantial existence but is not a non-existent illusion

This passage emphasizes that as the world is a stream of conditions arising and passing away, and the whole of this can be transcended in the cessation that is nirvana, it is inappropriate to see the world, or the phenomena that comprise it, either as solid, substantial entities or as complete illusions (cf.M.63 and V.32). The truth lies in the middle. Dependent arising is a 'middle' way of understanding, just as the noble eightfold path is a 'middle way' of practice (L.27).

Seated on one side Venerable Kaccāyanagotta asked the Blessed One: 'Sir, it is said "right view, right view". In what terms does a view become right?'

'Kaccāyana, (people of) the world do indeed largely cling to two standpoints, (namely), (substantial) existence and (complete) non-existence. Kaccāyana, for one who sees with sound wisdom the arising of the world as it really comes to be, that (view of) the non-existence of the world does not arise. Kaccāyana, for one who sees the cessation of the world with sound wisdom as it really comes to be, that (view of) the existence of the world does not arise.

Kaccāyana, the (people of) the world are largely fettered by attachment, clinging and dogmatic grasping. But (if) one does not resort to or firmly entertain that sort of attachment, clinging and the mind's underlying tendency to firmly get established in dogmatic grasping, thinking "(This is) my Self",[546] then one does not come to doubt or have perplexity about the fact that it is merely the painful that arises when arising and merely the painful that ceases when ceasing. To him it be-

546 In the pre-Buddhist *Upaniṣad*s, everything was seen as ultimately being Brahman, the divine reality that was also identical with one's inner Self: see heading above Th.170.

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comes knowledge not dependent on anyone else. In these terms the view becomes right.

Kaccāyana, the view that everything exists is one extreme. The view that nothing exists is the second extreme. The Tathāgata, without falling into these two extremes, expounds his teaching in the middle: from ignorance as condition are the volitional activities ... [The other conditions in the sequence follow.] Such is the origin of this whole bundle of suffering. From the fading away without remainder of ignorance is the cessation of the volitional activities ... Such is the cessation of this whole bundle of suffering.

Kaccāyanagotta Sutta: *Saṃyutta-nikāya* II.17, trans. P.D.P.

Critical reflections on the idea of a creator God

The Buddha did not accept that any deity created the world or its beings. He taught that the gods of the heavenly realms are themselves trapped within the round of rebirths like all other unliberated beings, and that the physical world develops by natural laws, like all other conditioned phenomena, being governed by the principle of dependent arising. He said that the round of rebirths has no discernible beginning (Th.55), and refused to accept either the view that the world was non-eternal, so as to perhaps need a creator, or that it was eternal (Th.20).

In the Buddha's day, many people saw the deity Great Brahmā as having created the world and its beings. The Buddha did not deny the existence of Great Brahmā, who he saw as rich in kindness and compassion, but saw both him and his followers as mistaken about him being the world's creator. It was simply that at the start of a world cycle (see Th.63), Great Brahmā was the first to be reborn in his heaven world, and he became lonely, wishing for there to be other beings there. As other beings later appeared there, he thought he had created them, even though they had simply been reborn there from a higher realm, like him, due to their stock of karmic benefit reducing. These other beings also thought he had created them, and when one of them was reborn as a human and developed the meditative power to remember only his immediately previous life, he taught that Great Brahmā was the eternal creator of other beings (Dīgha-nikāya *I.18*).

While Buddhism does not accept a creator God, some of the more impersonal qualities applied to 'God' in theistic religions, such as timelessness and perfection, also apply to nirvana.

A God in charge of all would be responsible for the ills of the world *Th.169*

This passage argues that if a creator God existed, he would be the one who was responsible for the ills of the world. Also relevant to this point is passage Th.68.

If success and misfortune, actions good and bad of the entire world, are determined by a God, a person is merely one who acts according to his command. By those (actions) it is God who gets tainted.

Mahā-bodhi-jātaka v.142: *Jātaka* V.238, trans. P.D.P.

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The lack of a permanent, essential self

The pre-Buddhist texts known as the Upaniṣads *taught that within all beings is a permanent, essential Self (Skt* ātman*) that is an independent inner controller of actions, and identical to* Brahman*, the impersonal underlying substance of the whole world. Another idea of Self is the Jain idea of an individual 'life principle' (*jīva*) or immortal soul in beings. While Pāli and Sanskrit lack capital letters, it is appropriate to use a capital 'S' here to indicate such ideas: Self. The Buddha never* directly *denied 'Self' (*Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.400–401*), but emphasized that nothing could be found which could be validly taken as 'Self' or its possession, clearly implying that 'Self' does not exist. He also held that to take anything as Self or belonging to it is to make it a focus of limiting attachment, leading to suffering when what one takes as permanent and reliable turns out not to be so.*

*Those who hold the views on the undetermined issues (see Th.20) are seen as doing so because they take one or other or all of the components of a person (the five 'categories of existence': see passage Th.151) as a permanent Self or its possession (*Saṃyutta-nikāya *IV.396). So they think an enlightened person is a Self-essence and ask about the fate of this after death. But as Buddhism teaches no such Self-essence can be found, asking about its fate after death is pointless. As for the nirvanic nature of an enlightened person, even in life, that is beyond words.*

Th.170 The world as empty of Self

*The following passage emphasizes that everything is 'empty' (*suñña*) of Self or anything belonging/pertaining to such a thing.*

It is, Ānanda, because it is empty of Self and what belongs to Self that it is said, 'Empty is the world'. And what is empty of Self and what belongs to Self? The eye ... visible forms ... eye-consciousness ... eye-contact ... whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition ... [The same is then repeated as regards the other four physical sense-channels and the mental sense-channel.]

Suñña Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.54, trans. P.H.

Th.171 No aspect of a person is a permanent Self or belonging to such a thing

In this passage, the Jain disputant Saccaka comes to the Buddha to worst him in debate, as he thinks himself such a clever debater that any opponent will tremble. The Buddha explains why he teaches that everything is an-attā *(Skt* an-ātman*), non-Self, i.e. not something that is a permanent Self or belonging to such a thing. This teaching is applied to the five 'categories of existence' that make up a person (see Th.151).*

Saccaka said thus to the Blessed One: ... 'How does good Gotama train the disciples, and in what respect does the renunciant Gotama mostly carry out his instruction concerning his disciples?'

'Aggivessana, I mostly train my disciples and carry out instruction concerning the disciples in the following manner: "Monks, material form is impermanent. Feeling is impermanent. Perception is impermanent. Volitional activities are impermanent and consciousness is impermanent. Monks, material form is non-Self. Feeling is non-Self.

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Perception is non-Self. Volitional activities are non-Self, and consciousness is non-Self. All conditioned things are impermanent. Everything is non-Self".'

'Good Gotama, a comparison occurs to me.' 'Express it Aggivessana.' 'All the varieties of seeds and vegetables that grow and develop do so established and supported on earth, and all powerful work that has to be done, should be done, established and supported on earth. In the same manner this individual person, with material form as Self, established in material body begets karmically beneficial or karmically harmful actions, this individual person with feeling as Self ... with perceptions as Self ... with volitional activities as Self ... with consciousness as Self begets karmically beneficial or karmically harmful actions.'

'Aggivessana, do you say "Material form is my Self, feeling is my Self, perception is my Self, volitional activities are my Self, consciousness is my Self"?' 'Good Gotama, I do say so, and so also does this large crowd.' 'What the large crowd says is not what matters. Come Aggivessana, you clarify your own view.' 'Good Gotama, I say, that material form is my Self, feeling is my Self, perception is my Self, volitional activities are my Self, consciousness is my Self.'

'Then, I will cross-question you yourself on this and you may reply, as it pleases you. Aggivessana, do head anointed warrior kings like King Pasenadi Kosala, King Ajātasattu of Magadha wield power over their kingdoms, to execute those that have to be executed, to confiscate those things that deserve to be confiscated, and to banish those that have to be banished?' 'Yes, good Gotama, they wield such power. Even the leaders, gathered here, of the Vajjis and Mallas, wield such power. So there is no question about head anointed warrior kings.' 'Aggivessana, you say material form is your Self. Do you wield power over that material form, as "May my material form be like this and not like that?"'... 'No, good Gotama.' 'Attend carefully and reply Aggivessana. What you said earlier does not agree with what you said later and what you said later does not agree with what you said earlier. Aggivessana, you say that, feeling ... perception ... volitional activities ... consciousness ... are your Self, do you wield power over feeling ... perception ... volitional activities ... Consciousness ...?' 'No, good Gotama.' 'Attend carefully and reply Aggivessana. What you said earlier does not agree with what you said later ...

What do you think, Aggivessana, is material form permanent or impermanent?' 'Impermanent, good Gotama.' 'Is that which is impermanent painful or pleasurable?' 'Painful, good Gotama.' 'Is that which is impermanent, painful, having a transient nature, suitable to be considered as "this is mine, this I am, this is my Self"?' 'No good Gotama.' [The same is then repeated as regards each of feeling, perception, volitional activities and consciousness.]

'Aggivessana, a certain one, clinging to the painful, gone into the painful, cleaving to the painful regards it as, "This is mine, I am this, this is my Self." Would he comprehensively understand the painful by himself or live having fully destroyed the painful?' 'Good Gotama, how could it be? No, good Gotama, that would not happen.' 'Aggivessana, like a man, wandering in search of heartwood, would enter a forest with a sharp axe, and seeing a tall, straight, new plantain tree he would

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cut it at the root, and at the top. He would then open up the sheaves, and would not come even to sapwood, [547] so how could there be heartwood? In the same manner, Aggivessana, in trying to examine me, to find fault with me, to debate with me in connection with your theory, it has turned out to be empty, useless and rejected.'

... Saccaka said, 'Good Gotama, put aside this view of mine, and also the view of all other renunciants and brahmins, which I think is like idle talk. How do the disciples of good Gotama, practise according to his message, follow the given advice, dispel doubts, become confident, and abide not relying on another, in the dispensation of the Teacher?'

'Here, Aggivessana, my disciples see whatever material form, in the past, future or present, internal or external, coarse or fine, inferior or superior, far or near in entirety as "This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self." This is seen with proper insight, as it really has come to be. Whatever feeling, whatever perception, whatever volitional activities, whatever consciousness, in the past ... are seen as they really have come to be. Aggivessana, with this much, my disciples have practised according to the message'

Cūḷa-saccaka Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.228–235, trans. P.D.P.

Th.172 The idea of a Self-essence has no basis, and is harmful

This passage shows clearly that the Buddha's teaching did not accept or affirm the existence of an essential Self of any sort, and saw belief in such a thing as harmful. Taking something as a Self or its possession makes it a focus of attachment. Recognising it as non-Self leads to a liberating letting go from it.

'Monks, the learned noble disciple, a seer of noble ones, accomplished in the teaching of the noble ones, and well trained in the teaching of the noble ones, a seer of good persons ... sees material form as "this is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self", sees feeling ... perception ... volitional activities ... sees whatever is seen, heard, felt, cognized, attained, sought after, and reflected in the mind as "this is not mine ...". And whatever is that dogmatic standpoint: "the world is the Self, I will hereafter become permanent, enduring, eternal, of the nature of not changing and will remain like eternity" – this too is seen as "not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self". When one discerns like this one has no agitation regarding the non-existent.

... Monks, you might grasp that object of grasping which is permanent, everlasting, eternal, of unchanging nature, and will stay the same like unto eternity. Monks do you see such an object of grasping?' 'No, venerable sir.' 'Good! I too do not see any. Monks, you might hold that dogma of a Self which when one holds on to it does not give rise to grief, lamentation, pain, unhappiness and distress. Do you see one like that?' 'No, venerable sir.' 'Good! I too do not see any. Monks, you may depend on that dependence on dogmatic belief, which when you depend on it, does not give birth to grief ... Do you see such dependence on dogmatic belief ...?' 'No, venerable sir.' 'Good! I too do not see any.

547 Like an onion, it lacks a core.

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Monks, when there is a Self, would there be the idea "there is something belonging to Self"?' 'Yes, venerable sir.' '(However,) when a Self or what belongs to a Self is in truth and reality not obtainable, isn't this dogmatic position taken as, "The world is the Self, I will hereafter become permanent, everlasting, eternal, of the nature of not changing and will remain like eternity" fully and entirely a foolish doctrine?' 'How could it not be, sir, it is fully and entirely a foolish doctrine.'

'Monks, the learned noble disciple seeing thus becomes disenchanted with material form[548] ... feeling ... perception ... volitional activities ... consciousness. Being disenchanted he becomes non-attached. With non-attachment he becomes released. When released there is knowledge that one is released: "Birth is destroyed, the requirements of the holy life have been fulfilled, what ought to be done has been done, and there is nothing more to be done hereafter."'

Alagaddūpama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.136–139, trans. P.D.P.

Karma and its results without a permanent Self *Th.173*

This passage challenges the idea that experiences arising due to karma happen to a being who is identical to or completely different from the being that did the karma/action in a past life. Rather, karma, its results, and a person are part of a flow of processes. Dependent arising is seen as a middle way between 'eternalism' and 'annihilationism'. 'Eternalism' is belief in a permanent, essential Self or I which will be untouched by death: an immortal soul, 'me' forever. 'Annihilationism' is the belief that one is a substantial self that is then totally destroyed at death. Dependent arising means that for the unenlightened, there is rebirth, but rebirth is the continuation of a stream of conditioned processes, not the continuation of an unchanging Self or a complete end of ongoing personal continuity. After death, a changing personality-flux flows on. Given long enough, this may become very different from how one is now: and yet what will be then will have developed out of how one is, and acts, now.

'Good Gotama, is suffering self-produced? The Blessed One said: 'Kassapa, do not say that'. 'Good Gotama, is suffering other-produced?' The Blessed One said: 'Kassapa, do not say that.' 'Good Gotama, is suffering self-produced and other-produced?' The Blessed One said: 'Kassapa, do not say that.' 'Good Gotama, is suffering neither self-produced nor other-produced, but arisen by chance?' The Blessed One said: 'Kassapa, do not say that.'

'Good Gotama, (then) is there no suffering?' 'Kassapa, it is not that there is no suffering, there is suffering.' 'Then, good Gotama, is it that good Gotama does not know and does not see suffering?' 'Kassapa, I do know and see suffering.' ... 'Venerable sir, tell me about suffering and teach me about suffering.'

'Kassapa, when the idea is there from the beginning that he acts and he (himself) experiences (the karmic result), saying that suffering is self-produced, this view leads to eternalism. When for the person affected by feeling the idea occurs that he acts and another experiences

548 That is, he lets go of material form, does not grasp at, lean on or identify with it, having had enough of it.

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(the karmic result), saying that suffering is other-produced, this view leads to annihilationism. Without coming to these two extremes the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma in the middle: from ignorance as condition are the volitional activities; from the volitional activities as condition is consciousness ... [the other conditions in the sequence then follow].

Acela-kassapa Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.19–20, trans. P.D.P.

Th.174 Neither the same nor different from life to life

This passage makes clear that from life to life, a being is neither identically the same nor completely different. Rather, the later rebirth is dependent on the earlier rebirth, as part of a series of processes that condition each other.

The king said, 'Venerable Nāgasena, is he who arises (in a new life) the same or is he another?' The Elder said, 'He is not the same and he is not another. ... As, sire, milk taken from a cow would after a time turn into curds, and from curds into butter, and from butter into ghee, so, sire, would one who spoke thus, "That milk itself is precisely those curds, precisely that butter, precisely that ghee", would he, sire, saying this, be speaking correctly?' 'O, no, venerable sir, they come into being because of it.' 'Even so, sire, a continuity of processes runs on; one arises, another ceases; it runs on as though there were no before, no after; so neither the one nor other is reckoned as the last consciousness.'

Milindapañha 40–41, trans. P.H.

Th.175 The ordinary self is something to cultivate wisely

These passages make clear that self in the everyday sense of 'oneself', the empirical self in the form of the stream of mental and physical processes that can be experienced, is accepted, and is something that the practice of the path enhances, so that a person becomes calm, strong, and well-centred, a spiritually great man or woman (see in Th.70). An important aspect of this is the wisdom which enables them to see that the changeable empirical self has nothing to do with a permanent Self-essence.

This is the path by which great selves, great seers have fared; whoever practises this as has been taught by the Buddha will ... bring about the end of the painful.

Paṭhamana-kuhana Sutta: Itivuttaka 28–29, trans. P.H.

For the Teacher, the great sage, is the first in this world, his successor is his (arahant) disciple, the one of developed self. Then, in addition, there is also the one in training ...'

Bahujanahita Sutta: Itivuttaka 79–80, trans. P.H.

Th.176 It is better to see body as Self

The Buddha did not take the material body or any aspect of mental life as 'Self'. In ancient Indian thought, 'Self', is seen as an entity which is fixed and unchanging, retaining an absolute identity. The Buddha found that transience is actually a more characteristic feature of mental life than of the life of the body so, even though people more often get attached to their mental processes as 'Self', there are actually more grounds for taking body as 'Self'.

Monks, it may happen that the unlearned ordinary person would be

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disenchanted with, have non-attachment towards and be released from this body composed of the four great elements. What is the reason? Monks, of this body composed of the four great elements, he sees growth and decline, taking up and laying aside. Therefore the ordinary person gets disenchanted with, has non-attachment towards, and is released from this body composed of the four great elements.

Monks, an ordinary person does not think it fit to be disenchanted with, to have non-attachment towards and to be released from what is referred to as the mind, or the mental faculty, or consciousness. What is the reason for this? Monks, for a long time the ordinary person had become immersed in it, made it his own and grasped it as, 'this is mine, I am this, this is my Self'. Therefore, an ordinary person does not think it fit to be disenchanted with, to have non-attachment towards ... consciousness.

Monks, it would be better for the ordinary person to conclude that this body composed of the four elements is Self rather than that the mind (is Self). What is the reason? Monks, he sees this body composed of the four elements remaining for one year, two, three, four, five years, for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years, remaining for a hundred years and even more. As for this mind, or mental faculty or consciousness, night and day it arises as one thing and ceases as another.

Assutavā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.95, trans. P.D.P.

Abandon the five categories of existence as children abandon toys *Th.177*

This passage indicates that our attachment for the factors making up body and mind is like the attachment of children for houses of mud, or sand castles. We should let go of them so as to experience that which transcends them, nirvana.

Just as Rādha, boys or girls playing with mud houses are attached to those mud houses, derive amusement (from them), treasure them, and treat them as their belonging as long as their greed, interest, love, thirst, excitement, and craving for the mud houses is not dispelled, but when the greed, interest, love, thirst, excitement, and craving is dispelled, they, with their hands and feet scatter them, break them up and destroy them, putting them out of play; in the same way, Rādha, you too should scatter material form, break it up, destroy it, put it out of play. You should take the path of destruction of craving[549] ... scatter feeling ..., perception..., volitional activities ..., consciousness. The destruction of craving, Rādha, is nirvana.

Satta Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya III.190, trans. P.D.P.

The five categories of existence as like foam *Th.178*

These verses are given by the Buddha after watching foam on the river Ganges that could be seen to be 'void, hollow, insubstantial'. They indicate that the processes of body and mind are likewise empty of any substance than can be reliably held on to as a permanent identity or possession.

Material form is like a large glob of foam
Feeling is like a water bubble,

549 Which is what builds the five categories of existence from life to life.

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Perception is like a mirage,
Volitional activities are like the trunk of a banana tree,[550]
Consciousness is like a magician's magical illusion.

Pheṇa Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya III.142, trans. P.H.

Th.179 Nirvana as non-Self

*The first two of these passages indicate that among the elements of existence (*dhammas*), nirvana is unconditioned, and that while all conditioned things are impermanent and painful, all* dhammas*, including nirvana, are non-Self. The third passage, though, says that nirvana is not only permanent (as it is beyond time) and pleasurable, but has* some *of the qualities that non-Self things lack.*

Whether Tathāgatas are born or Tathāgatas are not born, that element has certainly stayed, the fact that things have stayed (as such), the regularity of phenomena: 'All conditioned things are impermanent' ... 'All conditioned things are painful' ... 'Everything is non-Self'.

Uppādā Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.286, trans. P.H.

As far as there are things conditioned or unconditioned, non-attachment is declared the foremost of them, that is to say, the crushing of pride ... cessation, nirvana.

Pasāda Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.34, trans. P.H.

Seeing the five grasped-at categories as impermanent, he gains patient acceptance accordingly, seeing 'the cessation of the five grasped-at categories is permanent, nirvana'.

Seeing the five categories as painful, he gains patient acceptance accordingly, seeing 'the cessation of the five grasped-at categories is blissful, nirvana'. ...

... as other, ... not conditioned by another, nirvana'.
... as disintegrating, ... not of a nature to disintegrate, nirvana'. ...
... as hollow, ... not hollow, nirvana'.
... as empty, ... the ultimate empty thing, nirvana'.
... as non-Self, ... the ultimate goal, nirvana'.
... as lacking an essence, ... essence, nirvana'. ...

'As other' is contemplation of non-Self (as are) ... 'as disintegrating' ... 'as hollow' ... 'as empty' ... 'as non-Self' ... 'as lacking an essence'.

Vipassanā-kathā: Paṭisambhidā-magga II.238–242, trans. P.H.

MAHĀYĀNA

The nature of wisdom

M.129 True wisdom sees the wonderful qualities of the Buddha's Dharma-body

Even with all their purified understanding, arhants and solitary-buddhas do not apprehend the Dharma-body of the Tathāgata, nor the extent of his omniscience. Any living beings who have faith in the words

550 That is, like an onion: various layers, but no core.

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of the Buddha should believe in permanence, in pleasure, in an essential self, and in purity. These are not distorted views.[551] These are in fact right views. Why is this? It is because the Dharma-body of the Tathāgata is the perfection of permanence, the perfection of pleasure, the perfection of essential selfhood, and the perfection of purity. Someone who views the Dharma-body of the Buddha in this way possesses right view. Someone who possesses right view is a true child of the Buddha. He is born from the Buddha's mouth, from the true Dharma. He is created by the true Dharma. He is the heir to the Dharma.

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 353, ch.12, p.222a20-25, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Dependent arising

Dependent arising and rebirth without an essential self *M.130*

This passage sees the twelve factors of dependent arising (see Th.158 and V.74) as a constant flux of impersonal processes that flows on within this life and from life to life.

This twelvefold dependent arising, with its range of different causes and conditions, is neither permanent nor impermanent. It is neither conditioned nor unconditioned. It lacks neither causes nor conditions. It has no sensations. It does not cause anything to be known. It is not something which can be exhausted. It is not something which can be destroyed. It is not something which can cease. It has existed since beginningless time. It is not separate. It flows along like the stream of a river.

Four aspects of this twelvefold dependent arising arise as the process of causality, and they lead to the kind of action that brings things together. What are these four aspects of dependent arising? They are: ignorance, craving, action, and consciousness.

Consciousness functions as a cause because its inherent nature is that of a seed. Action functions as a cause because its inherent nature is that of a field. Ignorance and craving function as causes because their inherent nature is that of the defilements. Action and the defilements bring about the seed of consciousness. Action functions as the field for the seed of consciousness. Craving waters[552] the seed of consciousness. Ignorance scatters the seed of consciousness. If these conditions are not present, the seed does not develop.

Action does not think, 'I function as the field for the seed of consciousness'. Craving does not think, 'I water the seed of consciousness'. Ignorance does not think, 'I scatter the seed of consciousness'. The seed

551 Typically in Buddhist texts, having distorted views is to see permanence in what is impermanent, pleasure in what is actually painful, an essential self in what lacks an essential self, and beauty in what is unlovely, impure. Here, a more important distortion is not to recognize permanence, pleasure, beauty/purity and even an essential self where they *do* exist: see M.145.

552 There is a double meaning here which is lost in translation, in that the verb *snehayati* can mean both 'cause to become wet' and 'cause to become attached'.

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of consciousness does not think, 'I come into being because of these conditions'.

The seed of consciousness, which has been scattered by ignorance, grows in the field of action, [553] sprouting because of the moisture of craving. Here and there, in the place of arising in the mother's womb, it causes the sprout of mind and body to germinate.[554] This sprout of mind and body does not create itself, it is not created by another, it is not created by both, it is not created by a god, it does not develop over time, it does not arise from an essential nature, it is not dependent on any single factor, and yet does not arise without any cause. From the coming together of the mother and father in sexual union, filled with pleasure, and from the coming together of other conditions, here and there, in the place of arising in the mother's womb, when the causes and conditions are sufficient, it causes the sprout of mind and body to germinate amongst phenomena which have no master, no idea of possession, no property, which are like space, and which are characterised by illusoriness in their inherent nature.

In the same way, there are five factors which bring about the arising of eye-consciousness. What are these five factors? Eye-consciousness arises conditioned by the eye, by (visual) form, by light, by space, and by the focusing of attention. The eye functions as the basis of eye-consciousness. Form functions as the object of eye-consciousness. Light functions as illumination. Space functions to reveal. The focusing of attention functions as concentration. If these conditions are not present, eye-consciousness does not arise. If the internal sense-base of the eye is not impaired, and form, light, space, and the focusing of attention are not impaired, then when they all come together, eye-consciousness will arise. The eye does not think, 'I function as the basis of eye-consciousness'. Form does not think, 'I function as the object of eye-consciousness'. Light does not think, 'I function as illumination for eye-consciousness'. Space does not think, 'I function to reveal for eye-consciousness'. The focusing of attention does not think, 'I function as concentration for eye-consciousness'. Eye-consciousness does not think, 'I come into being because of these conditions'. Still, when these conditions are present, eye-consciousness arises. The remaining faculties should be analysed in the same way.

There is no phenomenon which passes from this world to another world,[555] but when the causes and conditions are sufficient, action and the fruit of action can be recognised. It is like the reflection of a face seen in a mirror which is completely clean. There is no face which has passed into the mirror, but when the causes and conditions are sufficient, the face can be recognised. In the same way, nothing departs from this world and nothing reaches another, but when the causes and conditions are sufficient, action and the fruit of action can be recognised.

It is like the disc of the moon which follows its course 4000 leagues above us. Its reflection can be seen in a small pool of water. The disc of

553 Cf. Th.164.
554 Cf. Th.161.
555 Cf. Th.173–74.

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the moon does not depart from its place in the sky and pass into the small pool of water, but when the causes and conditions are sufficient, the disc of the moon can be recognised. In the same way, nothing departs from this world and nothing reaches another, but when the causes and conditions are sufficient, action and the fruit of action can be recognised.

It is like when fire burns when fuel is present as a condition. If there is insufficient fuel, the fire does not burn. In the same way, the seed of consciousness, which arises from action and the defilements, here and there, in the place of arising in the mother's womb, when the causes and conditions are sufficient, it causes the sprout of mind and body to germinate amongst phenomena which have no master, no idea of possession, no property, which are like space, and which are characterised by illusoriness in their inherent nature. This is how the causal dependence of internal dependent arising is to be viewed.

Śālistamba Sūtra, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

One who sees dependent arising sees the Dharma, and hence the Buddha *M.131*

This passage starts off by linking two statements found at Th.165 and Th.2, on seeing dependent arising, the Dharma and the Buddha. But in describing dependent arising as 'unborn', it applies a description applied only to nirvana in Theravāda Buddhism.

The bodhisattva, the great being Maitreya said to the Venerable Śāriputra, 'Venerable Śāriputra, the Blessed One, the Master of the Dharma, the Omniscient One has said, "A monk who sees dependent arising sees the Dharma. One who sees the Dharma sees the Buddha." What is meant by "dependent arising" here? By "dependent arising", the following is meant: This being, that becomes. From the arising of this, that arises.[556] ... [The twelve conditioning links are then listed. Each link is described as being the condition for the following one, and the cessation of each link is described as leading to the cessation of the following one.] This is what the Blessed One has described as dependent arising.

What is the Dharma? It is the noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditative concentration. This is what the Blessed One has described as the Dharma, the noble eightfold path and the attainment of nirvana, which is its fruit.

What is the Buddha, the Blessed One, here? One who has woken up to all phenomena is called a Buddha, one with the eye of noble wisdom, one who possesses the Dharma-body, who sees all the qualities of those who are training and those who have completed the training.

How does he see dependent arising? Here, the Blessed One said, "One who sees dependent arising as being constant, as having no life-force,[557] as being without any life force, who sees it properly as not being false, as unborn, unarisen, not created, unconditioned, unre-

556 See Th.156.

557 No essential self as a life-essence.

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strained, not based on anything, beneficial,[558] secure, indestructible, undecaying, unceasing, with no inherent nature, sees the Dharma. One who sees the Dharma in this way, as being constant, as having no life-force ... with no inherent nature, sees the Buddha, who has the body of the unsurpassed Dharma. Because of this perfect knowledge, he attains a clear understanding of the Dharma of the noble ones.

Śālistamba Sūtra, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Critical reflections on the idea of a creator God

M.132 Arguments against a creator God

This passage continues a theme found in Th.169. It raises some of the same arguments found in secular arguments against a creator God, though does not discuss the idea that such a deity might allow free will. It argues that anything created by an eternal and unitary God would also be eternal and unitary, yet the things we experience are clearly not eternal, and are diverse. A God who created beings in sub-human rebirths could not be compassionate. If evil done by people comes from a devil, not God then he is not all powerful; if it comes from people themselves, he is not all powerful; and if it comes from him, then he is not benevolent.

When the Buddha had explained the profound doctrine of the perfection of wisdom, a non-Buddhist in the audience called Vimati rose from his seat and addressed the Buddha, saying, 'Blessed One, Buddha, you have said that no phenomena which arise have an inherent nature, and that none are pure by nature. This is not true. The Lord God is eternal. He is the Father and Mother who begets all beings, and gives rise to all phenomena. He is the Creator who creates, forms, and sustains the world. The Ātman, the essential self, gives rise to all phenomena. This essential self rests in the centre of the heart, the size of a thumb. All phenomena arise through the combination of many other phenomena, so why do you say that they are non-arisen?'

The Blessed One said to Vimati, 'I will answer your question in order to free your mind from doubt. Listen closely. You claim that, "The Lord God is eternal. He has created everything." As a corollary, all things created by him would also be eternal. Ontologically, everything he creates must be of the same being as him. If you think that this is not the case, because what is created is ever-changing, and thus impermanent, then you contradict your previous statement. This is not acceptable. Why not? Whatever is created cannot be alienated from the essence of its creator. It must, therefore, be eternal. Conversely, the essence of the creator cannot be alienated from what is created, and must, therefore, be impermanent. If the Lord God the Creator is eternal, his creatures must also be eternal. If this is the case, how is it that we can observe that they exist at one point in time, and not at another? If they do not have permanent existence, how can they be eternal? In the

558 When properly understood, and applied to the cultivation of the path.

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same way, if the Lord God the "Creator" is like his creatures, he will also undoubtedly be impermanent.

Moreover, "creation" is diverse in many ways. There is no unitary oneness. If it were one, there could be no diversity. How can individual things in the world be one?[559]

Furthermore, if the Lord God is the Creator who has created everything, he then has no compassion. If he had compassion, he would have caused all living beings to be born as human beings or gods, and to experience constant pleasure. Would he really abandon living beings to the eight kinds of suffering? Would he let them fall into the three states of misfortune,[560] and undergo great suffering? If he had compassion, how could he create living beings out of himself, and then harm them?

If the Lord God the Creator is one and eternal, everything that he has created should be unchanging. Why are living beings impermanent? Why do they come into existence, and then become extinct? Why do beings in the five realms suffer from this kind of impurity?

When one sees an effect, one understands the cause. In just the same way, the Lord God is neither one nor eternal. One might claim that whatever is excellent has been created by the Lord God, whilst whatever is inferior and evil has been created by the Devil. This, however, does not accord with reason. Why not? If whatever is good does in fact come from the Lord God, and whatever is bad from the Devil, then good and bad are opposed to each other. How then can one call the Lord God the Lord God, which implies that he is the Lord who is in control of everything? Moreover, many living beings are evil-doers, and there are only a few who do good. The Devil, it would seem, is more powerful than the Lord God.

Again, you claim that the good done by living beings is judged and rewarded by the Lord God, and the evil done by them is inspired by the Devil. Your disciples always make this claim, saying "Those who do good will be born into heaven, and those who do evil will fall into hell." If being born in heaven or falling into hell is determined by one's good or evil deeds, though, how can the Lord God be their cause?

When a king orders one of his subjects to proclaim an edict of reward and promotion, we simply say that it was bestowed by the king, not by the subject who was ordered to make the proclamation. Similarly, when a king orders one of his subjects to take somebody's life, we say that it was the king who killed him, not the subject who was ordered to do so. In the same way, the Lord God should be held responsible for the good deeds done by living beings, and the Devil for their evil deeds. Why should living beings suffer because of their evil deeds?

For these reasons, one can be certain that the Lord God is not the Creator who has created everything. Furthermore, if he is one (unitary), how could he create so many innumerable good and bad minds? In this way too, we can know that he is not one.

If you say that everything comes from the Lord God, such that every-

559 That is, *if* all things came from one 'Creator', they would share its unitary nature but they do not.

560 As hell-beings, hungry ghosts and the various kinds of animals (including birds, fish, insects etc.)?

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thing is exclusively good, how is it that we can see evil? When a man is amongst many other people, he is recognized as an evil man. People in the world all say that those who do evil suffer the outcome of their own evil deeds in hell. If the evil done by living beings is caused by the Lord God, why is it only you who sees it as being caused by the Lord God? Someone who slanders others by claiming that they do evil deeds will be severely punished. In the same way, you would be punished for slandering the Lord God by claiming that he is the cause of the evil deeds of living beings.

'The Six Noumenal and Phenomenal Perfections *Sūtra*'/*Da-sheng-li-qu-liu-boluomiduo jing*, *Taishō* vol.8, text 261, p.910c17–911a27, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The lack of a permanent, essential self

M.133 Actions but no essential self that performs them

This passage emphasizes that there is no essential agent of action; actions arise from an interaction of mental processes.

Although he sees no beings and no suffering, Śākyamuni takes away their suffering.[561]

Living beings are overjoyed and delighted that their discomfort will not increase.

Properly understanding the inconceivable Dharma of the Buddhas, and having worshipped you, best of men, I enjoy the fruits obtained. ...

Cultivate meditative calm and insight, in order to relieve your suffering. The impurities of the household life, which torment the world, are removed.

Calm concentration, insight and even impurities are all empty, Sage. ...

Understand inactivity and functioning ... A chariot, composed of different parts, does not perceive anything, and yet it functions.

I have described action, but there is no-one who acts anywhere in the ten directions.[562] Just as the movement of the wind does not put out a fire in a tree, although neither the wind nor the tree are conscious, and the fire is not put out, there is no-one who performs an action.

Pitṛ-putra-samāgama, as quoted in the *Śikṣā-samuccaya* of Śāntideva, ch.14, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.134 Beings are unsubstantial like froth

This passage likens the nature of beings to froth, a mirage or an echo, to show they lack a permanent, substantial self (cf. Th.178).

Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva should view all living beings just like an illusionist views the illusion of a man. A bodhisattva should view all living beings just like a wise man views the reflection of the moon in

561 Cf. a passage cited in the Theravāda *Visuddhimagga* (XVI.90): 'For there is suffering, but none who suffers; there is action but no agent is found; nirvanic cooling exists, but no nirvanised person; the path exists, but no traveller is found on it'. That is, there is no essential self that suffers or goes beyond suffering. The Mahāyāna adds that suffering is not an unchanging essence either.

562 See note to M.55.

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water. A bodhisattva should see all living beings just like he views a face in a mirror.[563] A bodhisattva should view all living beings just like water in a mirage. ... A bodhisattva should view all living beings just like the sound of an echo ... a mountain made of clouds in the sky ... the first and last moments of a fleck of froth ... the arising and disappearance of a bubble in water... the core of a banana tree[564] ... a flash of lightning. This, Mañjuśrī, is how a bodhisattva should view all living beings.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.6, section 1, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Being beyond thoughts of 'I' and 'mine' *M.135*

A true bodhisattva *does not have a judgemental attitude towards people if they lack the* bodhisattva *perfections, but views all impartially, and without I-centred thoughts.*

Bodhisattvas, great beings, ... do not think in terms of giving and receiving. They do not think in terms of ethical discipline and its bad conduct. They do not think in terms of patient acceptance and emotional agitation. They do not think in terms of vigour and laziness. They do not think in terms of meditative absorption and disturbance. They do not think in terms of wisdom and stupidity. They do not think, 'I have been criticised'. They do not think, 'I have been praised'. They do not think, 'I have been honoured'. They do not think, 'I have been dishonoured'. Why is this? It is because, Śāriputra, the unarisen[565] does not think 'I have been criticised'. It does not think, 'I have been praised'. It does not think, 'I have been honoured'. It does not think, 'I have been dishonoured'. Why is this? It is because the perfection of wisdom completely uproots all thought.

Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, pp.89–90, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Sickness at the delusion of egocentric beings *M.136*

This passage has the bodhisattva *Vimalakīrti feigning physical sickness to signal his suffering in response to the 'I'-centred delusions of beings, when both they and any sickness or suffering lack any essence or permanent, substantial existence.*

Mañjuśrī said, 'Good man, are you fading? Are you passing away? Are you suffering from an imbalance of the elements caused by an excess of wind? Is your sickness weakening rather than growing stronger? The Blessed One inquires as to whether you are experiencing some slight pain, some slight affliction, some slight illness, if you are able to stand easily, and if you are strong, happy, faultless, and comfortable. What is the cause of your sickness, householder? How long will your sickness last? When will it be alleviated?'

Vimalakīrti said, 'Mañjuśrī, this sickness of mine will last as long as ignorance and the craving for existence last. My sickness will be pacified when all living beings are without sickness. Why is this the case?

563 The Sanskrit words used here for face (*mukha-maṇḍala*) and mirror (*ādarśa-maṇḍala*) emphasize that both the face and the mirror are circular (*maṇḍala*). This parallels the moon reflected in the water in the previous simile.

564 See note to M.116.

565 The 'unarisen' may mean the 'I' that does not really exist.

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Mañjuśrī, for a bodhisattva, saṃsāra is the presence of living beings. Sickness is dependent on saṃsāra. A bodhisattva will be free of disease when all living beings are free of sickness. For example, Mañjuśrī, if a merchant's only son falls ill, his mother and father will be ill too. As long as their only son has not recovered from his sickness, they too will suffer. In the same way, Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva loves all living beings like they were each his only son. He becomes ill because living beings are ill. When living beings are free from disease, he becomes free from disease. You ask me, Mañjuśrī, "What is the cause of your sickness?" A bodhisattva's sickness is caused by great compassion.' ...

Mañjuśrī said, 'How should a bodhisattva address another bodhisattva who is ill?' Vimalakīrti said, 'He should say that the body is impermanent, but not mention turning away or dispassion. He should say that the body is painful, but not praise nirvana. He should say that the body has no essential self, and that living beings should be brought to maturity. He should say that the body is peaceful, but not mention the ultimate peace. He should encourage him to confess all of his negative actions, but not say that they no longer have an effect. He should encourage him to use his own illness to develop compassion for other living beings who are suffering from illness. He should encourage him to recall the incalculable amount of pain he has experienced in previous existences. He should encourage him to recall everything he has done for living beings. He should speak to him of everything that has led him to accumulate wholesome roots. He should speak of primordial purity. He should speak of freedom from craving. He should speak of always making vigorous effort, and encourage him to become the king of doctors, and to cure all sickness. This is how a bodhisattva should address another bodhisattva who is ill.'

Mañjuśrī said, 'Son of good family, how should a bodhisattva who is ill understand his own mind?' Vimalakīrti said, 'Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva who is ill should understand his own mind in this way. This sickness has arisen from previous mistaken actions, and from the defilement of making assumptions which have no basis in reality. There is in fact no ultimately existing phenomenon which constitutes this sickness. Why is this? It is because it has emerged from the four great elements,[566] and these elements have no owner. Indeed, this sickness arises through the non-existence of an essential self. The phenomenon which is referred to as a sickness has no ultimate existence, but comes from the belief in an essential self. He should therefore not adhere to an idea of an essential self, but dwell perceiving the root of the sickness. He should give up any perception of an essential self, and instead endeavour to perceive phenomena. This body consists of phenomena. It is only phenomena which arise. It is only phenomena which cease. These phenomena do not perceive each other. They are not aware of each other. When they arise, they do not think, 'I am arising', and when they cease, they do not think 'I am ceasing'. ...

This, Mañjuśrī, is how a bodhisattva who is ill should understand his own mind, in order to get rid of old age, sickness and death. So,

566 Earth, water, fire, and wind.

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Mañjuśrī, if a bodhisattva does not attain awakening, all of his efforts will have been in vain. Just as one who destroys his enemies is called a 'hero', bodhisattvas are called 'bodhisattvas' because they have relieved the pain of old age, sickness, and death.

The bodhisattva who is sick should examine things in the following way. "Just as my sickness is not real, so too the sickness of all living beings is not real." If he examines things in this way, he will not fall into the view that it is possible to benefit living beings,[567] but will cultivate great compassion for them.'

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.4, sections 5–7, 10–11, 14–15, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Emptiness of inherent nature/inherent existence

The *Heart Sūtra* on emptiness and perfect wisdom *M.137*

This famous short text talks of each the five categories of existence that make up a being (see Th.151) as empty of any inherent nature/separate existence (see M.138), this being due to their deep interrelation with other factors of existence. Their very 'nature' is an emptiness of essence. In the field of emptiness indeed, no individual items such as the five categories of existence can be picked out.

Homage to the All-Knowing One.

The bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara,[568] practising the profound perfection of wisdom, closely examined the five categories of existence, and saw that they were empty of any inherent existence.

'Here Śāriputra, form is emptiness, and emptiness itself is form. Form is not distinct from emptiness, and emptiness is not distinct from form. The same is true of feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness.[569]

Here Śāriputra, all phenomena are characterised by emptiness. They do not arise, and they do not cease. They are not pure, and they are not impure. They are not complete, and they are not deficient.

Therefore Śāriputra, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no perception, no volitional activity, and no consciousness. There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, and no mind. There is no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no physical object, and no mental object. There is no eye-element and so forth, up to no mind-consciousness-element. There is no ignorance, and no destruction of ignorance, and so forth, up to no old age and death, and no destruction of old age and death.[570] There is nothing which is painful, no cause, no cessation, and no path.[571] There is no knowledge, and no attainment.

Therefore Śāriputra, because a bodhisattva does not attain anything,

567 See M.94.

568 See M.55.

569 The other four bundles of processes which, along with form, make up a being.

570 The arising and cessation of the twelve conditioning factors leading to what is painful, starting with ignorance; see section introduction before Th.149.

571 The four Truths of the Noble Ones: see L.27.

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but relies on the perfection of wisdom, he dwells with his mind unrestricted. Because his mind is unrestricted, he is not afraid, and he overcomes deluded perceptions. This culminates in nirvana. All the Buddhas of the three times have relied on the perfection of wisdom, and awoken to unsurpassed, perfect awakening. Therefore, the perfection of wisdom should be known as a great incantation, an unsurpassed incantation, an unequalled incantation which removes everything which is painful because it is true, and not false.

The *dhāraṇī*[572] of the perfection of wisdom is: *gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā.*'[573]

This concludes the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom

Prajñāpārimitā-hṛdaya, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.138 The conditioned, empty nature of things

The influential Mahāyāna philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250 CE), founder of the Madhyamaka school, emphasized the idea of 'emptiness' (śūnyatā) in the sense that, as each and every thing depends on conditions for its existence and nature,[574] *it is empty of inherent nature/separate existence, or essence (on which, see also V.75–6 and 79). In this passage, Nāgārjuna responds to the criticism that this idea seems to negate the reality of even the four Truths of the Noble Ones, (see section introduction before Th.149). He argues that only if the painful and what originates it are empty/conditioned can they come to an end; something whose existence is inherent to it, non-dependently, can never change. Similarly, the cessation of the painful cannot be attained if it is a fixed, inherent existent, and nor can the path be gradually brought into being if it were to exist inherently. That is, only in an empty/conditioned world is it possible to bring what is painful to an end, and attain awakening.*

8. [Nāgārjuna] The Dharma taught by the Buddhas is based on two truths, worldly, conventional reality, and ultimate reality.

9. Those who do not understand the distinction between these two truths do not understand the profound reality of the Buddha's teaching. ...

11. Viewing emptiness in the wrong way will destroy someone of slow wits. It is like picking up a snake the wrong way, or learning something in the wrong way. ...

15. You attribute your own errors to us, like someone who has forgotten that he is mounted on a horse.

16. If you see existents as truly possessing inherent existence, then you will see them as being without any cause or condition.

17. You will also reject the ideas of effect, cause, agent, acting, activity, arising, ceasing, and the fruit of action.

18. We state that whatever is dependent arising is emptiness. That conventional designation is the middle way.

572 A powerful formula or incantation, similar to a mantra.

573 *Dhāraṇī*s are fundamentally untranslatable, but the meaning of this one can be conveyed as something like, 'Gone, gone, gone over, gone over to the other side, awakening, excellent!'

574 In the case of nirvana, generally seen as the 'unconditioned', the concept of it is conditioned by its opposite, and attainment of it depends on the conditioned world of *saṃsāra*.

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19. There is no phenomenon which is not dependently arisen. Therefore there is no phenomenon which is not empty.

20. If none of this is empty, then there is no arising or cessation. This implies the non-existence of the four Truths of the Noble Ones.

21. How can there be something painful which is not dependently arisen? What is painful has been described as impermanent, and so it has no inherent existence.

22. How can something which has inherent existence arise again? Therefore, if one rejects emptiness, nothing can arise.

23. Pain which has inherent existence cannot cease. By adhering to the idea of inherent existence, you reject the idea of cessation.

24. If the path has inherent existence, then it cannot be cultivated. If the path can be cultivated, then it has no inherent existence. ...

32. Someone who strove for awakening, but who had an unawakened inherent nature, would not be able to approach awakening even by practising the path of the bodhisattva.

Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā of Nāgārjuna, ch.24, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The perfection of giving as empty *M.139*

This passage says that the highest form of giving is that with no thought of giver, gift or receiver, for all these are empty of an essence or separate reality.

Śāriputra said, 'Venerable Subhūti, what is the worldly perfection of generosity, and what is the transcendental perfection of generosity?'

Subhūti said, 'The worldly perfection of generosity, Venerable Śāriputra, consists in the bodhisattva, the great being, giving generously. He gives to any renunciants, brahmins, poor beggars, or travellers who ask him for anything. ... He thinks, "I give. They receive. This is a gift. I unselfishly give away everything I have. I am developing Buddha-knowledge. I am practising the perfection of generosity. I dedicate this gift, given equally to all living beings, to unsurpassed, perfect awakening, but I should do so without anything being perceived by the mind.[575] By means of this gift and its fruit, may all living beings which can be perceived be happy in the Dharma, be free from clinging, and attain final nirvana." He gives a gift impeded by three kinds of attachment. What are these three kinds of attachment? They are the perception of an essential self, the perception of another, and the perception of a gift. These are the three kinds of attachment which impede him when he gives a gift. This is what is known as the worldly perfection of generosity. Practising in this way, Venerable Śāriputra, someone who is worldly does not progress.[576] He does not free himself. He does not approach awakening. This is why it is known as the worldly perfection of generosity.

What, then, is the transcendental perfection of generosity? It is completely pure in three ways. What are these three ways in which it is

575 A *bodhisattva* who has perfected the perfection of generosity gives a gift, but at his now transcendent level of giving, he comes to form no idea or perception of a giver, a gift, or a recipient. This is point is discussed at greater length in the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra.*

576 They will not make progress towards unsurpassed perfect awakening, although they may, of course, make progress in a relative sense.

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completely pure? Here, when the bodhisattva, the great being, gives a gift, he does not perceive an essential self (as giver), he does not perceive a recipient, and he does not perceive a gift. Nor does he perceive any fruit. These, Venerable Śāriputra, are three ways in which the bodhisattva, the great being, is completely pure. Again, Venerable Śāriputra, when the bodhisattva, the great being, gives a gift, he does not present that gift to all living beings. He does not perceive any living beings. He does not perceive an essential self. He dedicates the gift to unsurpassed, perfect awakening, but he does not perceive any awakening. This is what is known as the transcendental perfection of generosity. Why is this known as the transcendental perfection of generosity? Practising in this way, Venerable Śāriputra, one makes progress away from the world. One frees oneself. One approaches awakening. This is why it is known as the transcendental perfection of generosity.

Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, 263–264,
trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.140 How insight into emptiness aids the practice of the perfections

This passage explains that the perfections that the bodhisattva *cultivates in order to aid other beings and attain Buddhahood, are not permanent entities – if they were, they could not be gradually cultivated (see M.138) – nor are they even separate phenomena that can 'be developed' or grow. They are part of an inconceivable network of processes, and it is from understanding this, and working with it, that the 'perfections' 'grow'.*

Subhūti said, 'It is wonderful, Blessed One, how the Tathāgata, the arhant, the perfectly awakened Buddha has taught the true nature of all phenomena, which is inexpressible. Blessed One, as I understand the meaning of what the Blessed One has said, all phenomena, Blessed One, are inexpressible.' The Blessed One said, 'Exactly, Subhūti, exactly. All phenomena, Subhūti, are inexpressible. Why is this? It is not possible, Subhūti, to express the emptiness of all phenomena.'

Subhūti said, 'Blessed One, can something which is inexpressible grow or decline?' The Blessed One said, 'No, Subhūti, indeed not.'

Subhūti said, 'Blessed One, if something which is inexpressible cannot grow or decline, then the perfection of generosity will not grow or decline, the perfection of ethical discipline, the perfection of patient acceptance, the perfection of vigour, the perfection of meditation and the perfection of wisdom will not grow or decline. If, Blessed One, the six perfections do not grow and do not decline, how can a bodhisattva, a great being, attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening by the power of the growth of the six perfections? How can he approach unsurpassed, perfect awakening? A bodhisattva, Blessed One, a great being cannot approach unsurpassed, perfect awakening if the perfections are not fully developed.'

The Blessed One said, 'Exactly, Subhūti, exactly. Something which is a perfection cannot grow or decline at all. A bodhisattva, a great being, who practises the perfection of wisdom, who develops the perfection of wisdom, and who is skilled in means does not think, "This perfection of generosity is growing." or "This perfection of generosity is diminishing." Rather, he thinks, "This 'perfection of generosity' is only a

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label." When he gives a gift, he dedicates the absorption of mind, the arising of the awakening-mind, and the wholesome roots involved to unsurpassed, perfect awakening. His dedication of these things is the same as unsurpassed, perfect awakening.

[He thinks in the same way with regard to the other perfections, and] when he undertakes to act morally, ... when he is patiently acceptant, ... when he maintains vigour, ... when he reaches attainments in meditation, ... (and) when he practises the perfection of wisdom, and develops the perfection of wisdom, he dedicates the absorption of mind, the arising of the awakening-mind, and the wholesome roots involved to unsurpassed, perfect awakening. His dedication of these things is the same as unsurpassed, perfect awakening.'

The Venerable Subhūti then said, 'What then, Blessed One, is unsurpassed, perfect awakening?' The Blessed One said, 'Unsurpassed, perfect awakening, Subhūti, is reality, and reality, Subhūti, does not grow or diminish. If a bodhisattva, a great being, repeatedly and frequently dwells with his mind absorbed by this, then he will approach unsurpassed, perfect awakening, and that mental absorption will not be lost. In this way, Subhūti, something which is inexpressible does not grow or decline, and in the same way, the perfections do not grow or decline. In the same way, Subhūti, no phenomena grow or decline. By dwelling with his mind absorbed in this way, Subhūti, a bodhisattva, a great being, approaches unsurpassed, perfect awakening.'

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, ch.18, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Entering the Dharma-door of non-duality *M.141*

This passage gives various implications of 'non-duality': the idea that due to the pervasive interrelationship of everything, it is inappropriate to set up dualistic contrasts between seemingly opposing things. Yet ultimately, the only way of expressing non-duality is through silence, as any speech depends on making contrasts: such as between non-dualism and dualism!

Then the Licchavi Vimalakīrti asked those bodhisattvas, 'Good men, how do bodhisattvas enter the Dharma-door of non-duality?' ...

The bodhisattva Siṃhamati said, 'Thinking, "This is characterised by intoxicating inclinations" and "This is not characterised by intoxicating inclinations" is dualistic. One who has attained impartiality does not perceive things as being characterised by intoxicating inclinations, or as not being characterised by intoxicating inclinations. He attains non-perception, and in his impartiality of perception, he attains impartiality but is not restricted by impartiality. In this way, he enters non-duality.'

The bodhisattva Sukhādhimukta said, 'Thinking, "This is happiness" and "This is unhappiness" is dualistic. One who has abandoned all pleasures, and has a mind which is like space because of the complete purity of his understanding, does not generate anything, and he enters into non-duality.'

The bodhisattva Nārāyaṇa said, 'Thinking, "This is mundane" and "This is transcendental" is dualistic. The mundane is empty of any essential nature, so nothing transcends and nothing descends, nothing moves and nothing stays still. Where there is no transcendence or descent, no movement or stillness, one enters non-duality.'

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The bodhisattva Dāntamati said, 'Thinking, "saṃsāra" and "nirvana" is dualistic. When one sees the true nature of saṃsāra, one neither wanders in saṃsāra nor attains final nirvana. When one realizes this, one enters non-duality.'

The bodhisattva Pratyakṣadarśin said, 'Thinking, "This is perishable" and "This is imperishable" is dualistic. What is destroyed is finally destroyed, and what is finally destroyed cannot perish. That is why it is said to be imperishable. Something which is imperishable is transient, and something which is transient is not perishable. This is what entering the Dharma-door of non-duality means.'

The bodhisattva Samantagupta said, 'Thinking, "essential self" and "no essential self" is dualistic. How is one who does not perceive the existence of an essential self to rid himself of such a self? One who does not see any essential nature of the self in a dualistic way enters non-duality.'

The bodhisattva Vidyuddeva said, 'Thinking, "knowledge" and "ignorance" is dualistic. The essential nature of ignorance is knowledge. Ignorance is indeterminable, it lies beyond methods of determination. One who realizes this realizes non-duality, and enters non-duality.' ...

The bodhisattva Akṣayamati said, 'Thinking that one will practise generosity in order to develop omniscience is dualistic. The essential nature of generosity itself is omniscience, and the essential nature of omniscience itself is development. In the same way, thinking that one will practise ethical discipline, patient acceptance, vigour, meditation or wisdom in order to develop omniscience is dualistic. The essential nature of wisdom itself is omniscience, and the essential nature of omniscience itself is development. One who enters into this single way of conduct enters non-duality.'

The bodhisattva Gambhīrabuddhi said, 'Thinking, "Emptiness, freedom from characteristics, and freedom from aspirations are different things"[577] is dualistic. In fact, that which is empty has no characteristics, and that which has no characteristics is free from aspiration. When there is no desire, there is no activity of thought, mind, or mental consciousness. One who sees a single door of emancipation sees all of the doors of emancipation, and enters non-duality.'

The bodhisattva Śāntendriya said, 'Thinking, "Buddha", "Dharma", or "Sangha" is dualistic. The essential nature of the Buddha is the Dharma, and the essential nature of the Dharma is the Sangha. All of the Three Jewels are unconditioned, the unconditioned is space, and the behaviour of all phenomena is like space. One who sees things in this way enters non-duality.' ...

When the bodhisattvas has each explained non-duality in their own way, they addressed Mañjuśrī, the youthful prince of the Dharma, and said, 'Mañjuśrī, how does a bodhisattva enter non-duality?'

Mañjuśrī said, 'Good men, you have all spoken well, but still, all of your explanations are dualistic. There is a single teaching which is the entrance into non-duality, and it is that all phenomena do not express

577 Three traditional aspects of nirvana are that it is an emptiness, a freedom from characteristics, and a freedom from aspirations.

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anything, do not say anything, do not communicate anything, do not explain anything, do not declare anything, and do not discern anything.'

Then Mañjuśrī, the youthful prince of the Dharma, addressed the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, 'Son of good family, we have each explained non-duality in our own way. Please give us your explanation of the entrance into the Dharma which is non-duality.'

The Licchavi Vimalakīrti remained silent.

Mañjuśrī, the youthful prince of the Dharma, praised the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, saying, "Excellent! Excellent, son of good family! This is how bodhisattvas enter the Dharma-door of non-duality, with no syllables, sounds, or noises, no limited knowledge or actions.'

When this explanation was given, five thousand bodhisattvas entered the Dharma-door of non-duality, and attained patient acceptance of the fact that all phenomena are unarisen.[578]

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.8, sections 1, 10–16, 20–22, 32–33, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Mind-only and emptiness of subject-object duality

The world as mind-only *M.142*

This passage argues that the world that we perceive is just the flow of experiences in one's own mind. There are different interpretations of this perspective. Some see it as denying any external world, others see it as pointing out that our lived world of immediate experience is simply a flow of experience, influenced by language and a person's conditioned nature, whether or not there is anything beyond our experience. Either way, we should learn not to substantialise what we experience into things that we respond to with attachment or aversion. We should not split the flow of experience into substantial 'objects' and a substantial 'subject' or essential self. Immediate experience is empty of any real subject or objects. These ideas are central to the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna philosophy.

'Only perceiving the projections of their own minds, Mahāmati, ordinary immature beings engage in conceptualisation because they are attached to different kinds of external objects, and because they are attached to their habitual tendency to conceptualise existence and non-existence, oneness, otherness, things being both or neither, permanence and impermanence as having an essential nature.

Mahāmati, it is like when animals who are scorched by the summer heat conceptualise the existence of water in a mirage, and run towards it. They do not perceive the confusion of their own minds, and they do not discern that there is no water there. In the same way, Mahāmati, ordinary, immature beings, whose minds have been steeped in the formulation of different kinds of concepts since beginningless time, whose minds have been burned by the fires of greed, hatred and delusion, who crave the sphere of different kinds of forms, who are

578 That is, that the things we experience are ultimately no different from nirvana, the unborn.

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firmly based on the ideas of arising and breaking down, and who do not properly understand internal, external, existence, and non-existence, fall into grasping at oneness and otherness, non-being and being. ...

Mahāmati, it is like a man who is asleep and dreams of a country adorned with women, men, elephants, horses, chariots, foot-soldiers, villages, towns, cities, cattle, buffalo, forests, gardens, and different kinds of mountains, rivers, and pools, and who enters the harem of the king of that country before waking up. When he wakes up, he idles his time away recollecting that country and its harem. Do you think, Mahāmati, that a man like that, who spent time recollecting various unreal dreams, would be wise?' Mahāmati said, 'Certainly not, Blessed One.' The Blessed One said, 'In just the same way, Mahāmati, ordinary, immature beings who have been stung by wrong views and who are attracted to non-Buddhist teachers do not recognise that the reality projected by their own minds is like a dream, and depend on ideas of oneness and otherness, non-being and being. ...

Mahāmati, it is like hearing an echo of a man, a river, or the wind. The echo neither exists nor does not exist, because a sound is heard, and yet no sound is heard. In just the same way, Mahāmati, the views of existence and non-existence, oneness, otherness, and of things being both or neither should be understood as conceptualisations created by the habitual tendencies of one's own mind.

152. One who always sees the world as being like an illusion, a phantom, a magical device, a cloud, a dream, or a flash of lightning, is cut free from the triple continuity,[579] and is liberated.

153. There is no limited knowledge here, it is like a mirage in the air. When one sees phenomena in this way, one does not make any claims. ...

158. The various different things which appear to exist are like mirages in the air. They are seen in various different forms, but are like a son in an infertile woman's dream.

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, ch.2, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.143 The three levels of reality

This passage discusses three levels of reality: i) the world of everyday experience, which has the nature of being 'imagined' or 'constructed' (parikalpita) *by the mind elaborating on the immediate flow of experience to project a world of constructed appearances; ii) the 'other-dependent'* (paratantra) *level, which is the immediate flow of experiences, arising in dependence on each other according to dependent arising, which generates the first level; iii) the level of 'full perfection'* (pariniṣpanna)*, which is the level of true insight, in which one knows the nature and activities of the other-dependent level, knows it lacks any real subject or object, and so attains perfection: or knows that perfection was always a reality.*

In summary, all phenomena can be characterised in three ways. The first is the characteristic of imaginative construction. The second is the characteristic of other-dependency. The third is the characteristic of full perfection.

579 Of greed, hatred, and delusion.

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The characteristic of imaginative construction refers to the establishing of names and symbols for all phenomena and differentiating their natures, such that they come to be expressed in language. The characteristic of other-dependency refers to the dependent arising of all phenomena: if this exists, then that exists, and if this arises, then that arises. This refers to the twelvefold conditions, starting with "volitional activities are conditioned by ignorance", and ending with "this is the origination of this whole bundle of suffering," the last of the twelve conditions.[580] The characteristic of full perfection refers to the fact that all phenomena are the same, and are the way they are. Bodhisattvas understand the way things are because of their great vigour, intelligent focus, and genuine reflection. By gradually cultivating this understanding, they attain unsurpassed perfect awakening and truly realize perfection.

Son of good family, the characteristic of imaginative construction should be understood to be like the darkness in the eye of someone whose eyesight is impaired. The characteristic of other-dependency should be understood to be like the forming of images formed by the faulty vision of the eye of someone whose eyesight is impaired, such as when a hair, a circle, a fly, or a small particle appear as different images. The characteristic of ultimate perfection should be understood to be like the undistorted objects seen by the eye of someone who has eliminated the darkness in their eyes.

Son of good family, it is like when a clear crystal comes into contact with anything blue. It looks like a precious jewel, such as a sapphire or a dark blue jewel. People who mistake it for a precious jewel are deceived. When it comes into contact with something red, it looks like a ruby. When it comes into contact with something green, it looks like an emerald. When it comes into contact with something golden, it looks like gold. People who mistake it for a precious substance because of its colour are deceived. Guṇākara, you should see the habitual tendency towards conventional expressions as an appearance which has been imaginatively constructed on the basis of the characteristic of an other-dependent nature, just as a clear crystal takes on the colour of whatever it comes into contact with. You should understand what is imaginatively constructed on the basis of the characteristic of an other-dependent nature as being just like the mistaken perception of a sapphire, a ruby, an emerald, or gold. You should understand that the characteristic of the other-dependent nature is just like the clear crystal. The clear crystal appears as sapphire, ruby, emerald, or gold, in a stable and sustained way, although these precious substances never really exist. They do not have a self-existent nature. In the same way, you should understand that the characteristic of imaginative construction does not have a self-existent nature, and does not really exist in a stable and sustained way. Its appearance is imaginatively constructed on the basis of the characteristic of other-dependency.

Again, Guṇākara, the characteristic of imaginative construction can be understood to be conditioned by the interplay between images and

580 See Th.158.

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words. The characteristic of other-dependency can be understood to be conditioned by adherence to imaginatively constructed appearances on the basis of other-dependency. The characteristic of ultimate perfection can be understood to be conditioned by the non-adherence to the imaginatively constructed appearances on the basis of other-dependency.

Son of a good family, if a bodhisattva really understands the characteristic of imaginative construction as it is, then he really understands all phenomena which are without characteristics, as they are. If a bodhisattva really understands the characteristic of other-dependency as it is, then he really understands all phenomena which are characterised by the defilements, as they are. If a bodhisattva really understands the characteristic of ultimate perfection, then he really understands all phenomena which are characterised by purity, as they are.

Son of good family, if a bodhisattva really understands the phenomena which are without characteristics, based on the characteristic of other-dependency, he will be able to eliminate phenomena which are characterised by the defilements. If he eliminates phenomena which are characterised by the defilements, he will be able to realize phenomena which are characterised by purity.

Therefore, Guṇākara, because bodhisattvas really understand the characteristic of imaginative construction, the characteristic of other-dependency, and the characteristic of full perfection, they really understand the phenomena which are without characteristics, the phenomena which are characterised by the defilements, and the phenomena which are characterised by purity. Because they really understand the phenomena which are without characteristics, they eliminate all phenomena which are characterised by the defilements. Because they eliminate all phenomena which are characterised by the defilements, they realize all phenomena which are characterised by purity. They are thereby fit to be described as bodhisattvas who are skilled in the characteristics of all phenomena, and the Tathāgata can establish them as such.

If one does not understand things as being without characteristics, one will be unable to abandon defiled phenomena. If one is not able to abandon defiled phenomena, one will be hindered in one's realization of wondrously pure phenomena. If one does not gain insight into the evil one has done, one will be wild, wicked, and harm living beings. Tragically entangled in transient things, are such people not lost and pitiable?

Saṃdhi-nirmocana Sūtra, Taishō vol.16, text 676, ch.4, pp.693a15–c14, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The Buddha-nature as a positive reality

M.144 The Buddha-nature as empty of defilements but not of wonderful qualities

This passage sees the Tathāgata-garbha *(Buddha-nature) as empty of negative qualities but full of innumerable Buddha-qualities. It is the form of the Dharma-body when it is obscured by defilements.*

Blessed One, the Dharma-body is not said to be the cessation of suf-

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fering because any phenomenon is destroyed. It is known as the cessation of suffering (i.e. nirvana) because it is, from beginningless time, uncreated, unarisen, inexhaustible, impossible to exhaust, eternal, pure by nature, completely free from all defilements.

Blessed One, the body that is endowed with Buddha-qualities, which are inconceivable, unchanging, indissoluble, inseparable, more numerous than the grains of sand in the River Ganges, is the body of the Tathāgata. Blessed One, the body of the Tathāgata, when it is not free from all the defilements, is the Tathāgata-garbha.

Blessed One, an understanding of the Tathāgata-garbha is the same as the Tathāgata's understanding of emptiness.

Blessed One, the Tathāgata-garbha has never been seen or apprehended by any arhants, solitary-buddhas, or greatly powerful bodhisattvas.

Blessed One, there are two kinds of understanding of emptiness with regard to the Tathāgata-garbha. The first, Blessed One, is the understanding that the Tathāgata-garbha is empty. It is separate from, empty of, free from, and distinct from all of the defilements. The second, Blessed One, is the understanding that the Tathāgata-garbha is not empty. It is not separate from, empty of, free from, or distinct from the inconceivable qualities of a Buddha, which are more numerous than the grains of sand in the River Ganges.

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 353, chs.8–9, p.221c07–c21; cf. vol.11, text 310, p. 677a15–26, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

The real Self *M.145*

This passage, which would be criticized, or interpreted non-literally, by many Buddhists, says that while it is right to see conditioned things as impermanent, painful and non-Self, the Tathāgata or Dharma-body is permanent, true happiness, and also a real Self, rather than everything being non-Self and nirvana being only beyond change and true happiness.[581]

At that time, the Buddha addressed the assembled monks, 'Listen carefully. Listen carefully. Earlier, you used the analogy of someone being intoxicated, but although you understood the words of this analogy, you did not understand the meaning. What is the meaning? Someone who is intoxicated sees the sun and the moon, and thinks that they move, when, in fact, they do not. It is the same with living beings. Because they are overwhelmed by the defilement of ignorance, they develop distorted views. They see what has an essential self as lacking an essential self. They see what is permanent as impermanent. They see what is pure as impure. They see what is pleasurable as painful. It is because they are overwhelmed by the defilement of ignorance and because they think that things are like this that they do not understand the meaning of the analogy. This is like the intoxicated person who thinks that the sun and the moon move. "What has an essential self" refers to the Buddha. "What is permanent" refers to the Dharma-body. "What is pleasurable" refers to nirvana. "What is pure" refers to the Dharma.

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581 Cf. passage Th.179, on nirvana as permanent, blissful, and non-Self but sharing some qualities with Self.

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Monks, why is it said that someone who thinks that an essential self exists is arrogant, proud, and conceited, and will continue to wander in saṃsāra? Monks, although you might say, "We practise the contemplations of impermanence, of painfulness, and of the lack of an essential self", these three kinds of contemplation have no real meaning. I shall now explain the three ways in which one can practise the Dharma. Thinking of what is painful as pleasurable, and of what is pleasurable as painful, is to have a distorted view of the Dharma. Thinking of what is impermanent as permanent, and of what is permanent as impermanent, is to have a distorted view of the Dharma. Thinking of what lacks an essential self as possessing one, and of what possesses an essential self as lacking one, is to have a distorted view of the Dharma. Thinking of what is impure as pure, and of what is pure as impure, is to have a distorted view of the Dharma. Someone whose view of the Dharma is distorted in any of these four ways will not be able to practise the Dharma.

Monks, the idea of pleasure arises in the midst of painful phenomena. The idea of permanence arises in the midst of impermanent phenomena. The idea of an essential self arises in the midst of phenomena which lack an essential self. The idea of purity arises in the midst of impure phenomena. The ideas of permanence, pleasure, an essential self, and purity exist in both worldly and transcendental teachings. Worldly teachings contain the words for these ideas, but not their meaning. Transcendental teachings contain the words and their meaning. Why is this the case? Worldly people do not understand the meaning, because their view of the Dharma is distorted in four ways. Why is this? It is because they see things in a distorted way, because their minds are distorted, and because their vision is distorted. Because of these three kinds of distortion, worldly people see pain in the midst of pleasure, impermanence in permanence, no essential self in that which possesses an essential self, and impurity in purity. These are what are known as distorted views. Because of these distorted views, worldly people understand the words, but not the meaning.

What, then, is the meaning? Saṃsāra lacks an essential self. The Tathāgata possesses an essential self. The disciples and solitary-buddhas are impermanent. The Dharma-body of the Tathāgata is permanent. All non-Buddhist teachings are painful. Nirvana is pleasurable. Conditioned phenomena are impure. The true Dharma of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is pure. These are what are known as undistorted views. If one's views are undistorted, one will understand both the words and the meaning. If one wishes to be free from the four kinds of distorted views, one should understand permanence, pleasure, an essential self, and purity in this way.'

Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 374, ch.3, p.377b15–c14, trans. D.S.

M.146 The pervasive nature of the Buddha-nature and the Buddha, which is without essential self

These passages present a different perspective to the one above. The Tathāgata-garbha *may* seem *like a Self, but is not truly a Self.*

Then the bodhisattva, the great being Mahāmati said this to the

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Blessed One, 'The Blessed One describes the Tathāgata-garbha in the sūtras. You describe it as being pure and clear in its essential nature, indeed, as being primordially pure, as bearing the thirty-two bodily characteristics (of a Buddha), and as being within the body of each living being. The Blessed One has described it as being like a greatly precious jewel wrapped in a dirty cloth, wrapped in the cloth of the categories of existence, of the elements, and of the sense-bases, a cloth made dirty by the impurities of greed, hatred, delusion, and erroneous assumptions. He has described it as being permanent, unchanging, beneficial, and constant. Blessed One, is this teaching of the Tathāgata-garbha not similar to the non-Buddhist teachings of an essential self? These non-Buddhists teach that the essential self is permanent, that it acts, that it has no qualities, that it is omnipresent and undying.'

The Blessed One said, 'No Mahāmati, my teaching of the Tathāgata-garbha is not similar to the non-Buddhist teachings of an essential self. The Tathāgatas, Mahāmati, teach the Tathāgata-garbha using words which indicate emptiness, the ultimate goal, nirvana, non-arising, freedom from characteristics, freedom from aspirations, and so forth. The Tathāgatas, the arhants, the perfectly awakened Buddhas explain the teaching which indicates the Tathāgata-garbha so that immature beings might leave behind their fear of the non-existence of an essential self, and so that they might enter the sphere that is without conceptualisation and appearances. Moreover, bodhisattvas, great beings, now and in the future, should not become attached to the idea of an essential self.

The Tathāgata-garbha, Mahāmati, is the cause for both what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, and it brings about all states of existence. Like an actor, it can take on many forms, but it has no essential self, or the characteristics of an essential self.

752. The Buddha is not a person, nor is he the categories of existence, but one whose knowledge is free from intoxicating inclinations.
Seeing him as eternally tranquil, I go to him for refuge.

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, ch.2, ch.6, and Sagāthakatham v.752,
trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The realization of Buddhahood in this very body *M.147*

This passage is from a Vajrayāna text of influence in East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Moreover, Vajrasattva, someone who is practising the Mahāyāna should cultivate a mind set on the path which is not dependent upon conditions, and on the fact that the nature of phenomena is that they lack an essential self. Why should they do this? If a practitioner has already observed the substratum of the categories of existence, and knows that in their essential nature they are like an illusion, a mirage, a reflection, an echo, a wheel of fire, or an ethereal city, then Vajrasattva, by practising in this way he will abandon the idea of an essential self. He masters his mind and, free of delusion, he realises that his own mind is originally unarisen. Why is this the case? Vajrasattva, it is because it is impossible to find a beginning or an end to the mind. ...

Vajrasattva, the Buddha has explained that this original mind is what causes one to attain Buddhahood. It is free from actions and the de-

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filements, yet actions and the defilements are dependent upon it. This is why it is worshiped and served by the world.

Mahā-vairocana Sūtra, Taishō vol.18, 848, pp.3b0914, b22–24, trans. D.S.

The radical interrelationship of all

M.148 The inter-penetration of all

These passages tell of the climax of the spiritual journey of Sudhana, where he comes to the bodhisattva *Maitreya, who shows him the huge tower of the Buddha Vairocana ('The Resplendent One'). This is described as the abode of all* bodhisattvas*, meaning that it represents the universe as seen by their wisdom and compassion. Sudhana enters the tower, where he finds a wondrous world, as vast as space, containing countless worlds and Buddhas. This illustrates the idea of the deep 'inter-penetration' of all aspects of reality, due to their deep inter-dependence, and their all being mutable forms of an underlying reality that is empty of any fixed nature.*

The bodhisattva Maitreya then approached the door of the tower named 'Garbha', which was decorated with images of the majestic sun. He snapped his fingers, and the door immediately opened, allowing Sudhana to enter. Sudhana entered the tower with great joy, and the door immediately closed behind him, just as it had opened. All of a sudden, he saw the tower as being immeasurably vast, like infinite space. The floor consisted of innumerable precious stones, emitting the great light of countless jewels, adorned with countless ornaments. Countless hundreds of thousands of wonderful towers were also seen inside it, and he could see that each of them was the same as the one first one, as vast and majestic as space. They neither blended into one another, nor obstructed each other. When he stood in a particular place, Sudhana could see all other places, and he could see that all of the other places were the same as the place where he stood.

At the same time, Sudhana himself was visible in all of the towers which had manifested inside the Garbha Tower decorated with images of the sun. Each tower could be seen to be extremely vast, and decorated with unrivalled beauty, and in each of them, three thousand great thousand world-systems[582] could be seen, each comprising a million individual worlds with four continents, and a million Tuṣita[583] heavens. The bodhisattva Maitreya could be seen being born in every single one of these worlds ... [as could the events of his life as a Buddha].

Sudhana then saw himself appearing before all these Tathāgatas, part of all those assemblies himself, serving the Buddhas in every possible way. His memories were not lost, and there was no obstacle to his understanding. Moreover, he heard musical instruments playing inside all of the towers, and he heard all of the small bells in the net of jewels, all emitting the indescribable, subtle wonderful sound of the Dharma. ...

582 See Th.62.

583 This is the name of the heaven in which Maitreya is said to dwell, ready to appear in our world as the next Buddha.

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Then the bodhisattva Maitreya entered the tower by means of his supernormal powers, and snapped his fingers to rouse Sudhana. He said to him, 'Son of good family, wake up! This is the nature of all phenomena. These are the characteristics of all phenomena, which bodhisattvas understand as arising from causes and conditions. They are like a hallucination, a dream, a shadow, or a reflection.'

Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, Taishō vol. 10, text 279, pp.434c29–436a21, 437c17–20; vol.9, text 278, p.780b10–782b29; vol. 10, text 293, pp. 831b26–835a21, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

This is the dwelling of those who dwell where one eon enters into all eons, and where all eons enter into one eon, ... of those who dwell where one phenomenon enters into all phenomena, and where all phenomena enter into one phenomenon without resistance; ... of those who manifest themselves in all world-systems without moving a hair's breadth; ... of those who act without attachment, who move through the realm of the Dharma free from birth, like the wind moving through the air. ... In a single atom, they see without obstruction the heaving ocean of as many worlds, living beings, and eons as there are atoms in the universe. ... Dwelling here, they see the sameness of living beings and the sameness of Buddhas amidst phenomena.

Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, ch 54 - 'Maitreya', trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Indra's net *M.149*

The first passage contains a brief reference to the jewelled net of the god Indra. In the second passage, this image is taken up and expanded on by the first patriarch of the Huayan school, Dushun (557-640 CE), to illustrate the deep interrelation of everything. In this, any item of existence is a reflection of every other one, as they are of it. It contains them all and makes them possible, and the totality of existence would be a different totality without it; not just in lacking it, but in lacking its effects. One and all are deeply interfused, yet not interfering with each other's particular nature.

Some lands, in which the entire realm of the Dharma is manifest are clear, pure, immaculate, like pictures, like magical illusions, vast, immeasurable, distinct from one another like the jewels in Indra's net.

Others manifest as treasuries full of precious things established in space.

Mahā-vaipulya Buddha-avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol. 10 text 279, ch.4, p.36a5–7, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Now then, the jewelled net of Śakra, the King of the Gods, is also known as Indra's net.[584] This royal net is entirely made of jewels, and because the jewels are bright and clear, they reflect the image of the other jewels, infinitely interpenetrating each other. All of the jewels appear in each individual jewel and, in the same way, each individual jewel appears in all of the other jewels at the same time. None of them come into view or disappear from view.

If we examine a jewel from the south-western part of the net, we

584 Śakra and Indra are different names for the same god.

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will see that this single jewel reflects the image of all other the jewels in the net as a whole, and, in the same way, every other individual jewel in the net reflects this jewel at the same time. Every individual jewel in the net reflects all of the other jewels in the net at the same time, and so too do all of the other individual jewels, in an infinite regress. It is the infinite within the finite. That is to say, the infinite number of images of all of the other jewels are simultaneously reflected in each individual jewel, manifesting a splendid, grand, and immense true reflection without causing damage to the jewel in which they are reflected. If someone were to sit in one jewel, then he would also be sitting in all of the jewels in the ten directions at the same time. Why is this? It is because all of the jewels exist in each individual jewel. In one individual jewel that reflects all of the others, another jewel exists, and this other jewel also reflects all of the others. In this way, all of the jewels exist in each individual jewel. Think of it in this way.

Although someone who is sitting in one individual jewel enters all of the other jewels, he never leaves the jewel he is in. In the same way, all of the other jewels enter the jewel he is sitting in, so he does not have to leave the jewel he is sitting in in order to enter all of the others.

Question: You state that although someone who is sitting in one individual jewel enters all of the other jewels, he never leaves the jewel he is in. If he never leaves his jewel to enter any of the others, though, how can he enter all of the other jewels?

Answer: It is precisely because he does not leave the jewel he is in, that he can enter all of the others. If he had to leave the jewel he is in in order to enter all of the others, then he would not be able to enter all of the other jewels. Why is this? It is because there are no other jewels outside the one he is in.

Question: If there are no other jewels outside the one he is in, then the net is made of just one jewel. How then can it be said to consist of many jewels woven together?

Answer: It is because the net is made by starting with only one jewel, and then gradually adding more and more. Why is this? It is because the net can only be woven by starting with one jewel. If this jewel is discarded, the net cannot be woven.

Question: If there is only one jewel, how can the net be said to be woven?

Answer: Many jewels are woven together to make a net. This means that only one jewel exists. Why is this? The one is the mark of the whole, which is composed of many. If the one does not exist, then the whole cannot exist either. This is why the net is made of only one jewel. All enter this one. Think of it in this way.

Question: Although all the jewels in the ten directions excluding none enter an individual jewel in the south-western part of the net, there are jewels in the other parts of the net too. How then can the net be said to consist of only one jewel?

Answer: All of the jewels in the ten directions are one individual jewel in the south-west. Why is this? It is because one individual jewel in the south-western part of the net is all of the jewels in the ten directions. If you don't believe that one individual jewel in the south-western part

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of the net is nothing other than all of the jewels in the ten directions, simply take some ink and make a mark on a jewel in the south-western part of the net. You will then see that all of the jewels in the ten directions have simultaneously become marked by ink. As all jewels in the ten directions can be seen to be marked by ink, we can see that all of the jewels in the ten directions are just one jewel. ...

Think of this as a wondrous analogy for the different kinds of phenomena. ... Jewels only interpenetrate one another through their reflections, their substances are different from one another. Phenomena are not actually like this, because they interpenetrate one another in their very substances.

'Tranquillity and Insight Meditation in the Five Teachings of the Huayan'/*Huayan wu jiao zhi-guan* by Dushun, *Taishō* vol. 45 text 1867, ch.5, p.513a27–c10, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Treatise on the Golden Lion *M.150*

In this treatise of the third Huayan patriarch, Fazang (643-712), all the phenomena of the world are compared to parts of a golden lion, all of which are made of the same malleable gold, being forms of it. The gold of the simile represents the radiant Buddha-nature. Here it is seen as an ever-mutable substance that is empty of fixed form but is the basis of all phenomena, it is in this sense an 'emptiness' that is full of countless possibilities. Phenomena interpenetrate each other, through deep inter-dependence, and are also in a sense identical with each other, as they are all forms of the Buddha-nature, the underlying noumenon or foundational principle of reality.

1. Understanding dependent arising

What we refer to as 'gold' has no inherent existence. When the condition of the skilled craftsman is present, the image of a lion arises. It only arises when this condition is present. Because of this, it is said to be dependently arisen.

2. Differentiating form and emptiness

What we refer to as a 'lion' has no characteristics. In fact, it consists only of gold. The lion does not exist without the substance of the gold. Because of this, the gold and the lion are said to be form and emptiness. Emptiness, though, has no characteristics. It is manifested by form. It does not restrict the existence of illusions. This is what is said to be form and emptiness.

3. A summary of the three natures[585]

The lion which attracts one's interest is said to be imaginatively constructed. The lion which appears to exist is said to be other-dependent. The unchanging nature of the gold is said to be fully perfected.

4. Demonstrating that the lion has no characteristics

The lion is completely encompassed by the gold. No characteristic of the lion can be found apart from the gold. Because of this, the lion is said to have no characteristics.

5. Explaining the unarisen

If one sees things the way they are, then when the lion arises, one will see that it is only the gold which arises. There is nothing apart

585 The 'three levels of reality' as described in the *Saṃdhi-nirmocana Sūtra:* see passage M.143.

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from the gold. Although the lion arises and ceases, there is no increase or decrease in the basic substance of the gold. Because of this, the lion is said to be unarisen. ...

7. Mastering the ten profound questions

... 3. The gold and the lion are empty of characteristics. One or many can be freely created. Within them, causes and purposes are each different. Whether one or many, each remains in its own state. This is called the Door of the One and the Many Being Empty of Characteristics, Yet Being Different.

4. The lion's limbs and the tips of its hairs are encompassed by the gold. They are pervaded by the lion's eyes. Its eyes are its ears. Its ears are its nose. Its nose is its tongue. Its tongue is its body. They are all freely created without obstruction or hindrance. This is called the Door of the Unobstructed Nature of All Phenomena. ...

7. The lion's eyes, ears, and other organs, as well as each of its hairs, all have golden lions. The lions of each of its hairs simultaneously and instantly enter into a single hair. In each hair, there are countless lions, and yet they all enter into a single hair. In this way, there is layer upon layer, just like in the net of the King of the Gods. This is called the Door of the Realm of Indra's Net. ...

9. Attaining awakening

Awakening is both the path and awakening itself. When one sees the lion, one sees all conditioned phenomena, and even before they are destroyed, one sees that they are fundamentally calm. ...

10. Entering nirvana

When one sees the lion and the gold, one sees that the characteristics of both are exhausted, and that the defilements do not arise. Beauty and ugliness appear, but one's mind remains calm like the ocean. Conceptualisation is exhausted, and free from oppression. One is released from bondage and free from obstructions. One abandons forever the source of what is painful. This is what is called nirvana.

'Treatise on the Golden Lion'/*Jinshizizhang* of Fazang, *Taishō* vol. 45, text 1880, pp.663c10–666c24, trans. D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA

The three types of wisdom

The perfection of wisdom is developed through three stages: wisdom through learning, wisdom through reflective contemplation, and wisdom through meditative development (cf. Th.143).

V.71 Wisdom through learning

Wisdom through learning comes from listening to the words of the Dharma spoken by your teacher and understanding their meaning.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.409–10, trans. T.A.

V.72 Wisdom through contemplation

Wisdom through contemplation comes from not resting satisfied with just understanding the words of the teaching but processing it men-

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tally and establishing its meaning through reflection and inquiry, (if necessary) asking questions about points not understood. You must not rest content with a mere intellectual understanding but should scrutinize the meaning thoroughly in order to make sure that when the times come for you to go on a solitary retreat, you will be able to practise it independently, without having to ask someone else about the main points.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', p.410, trans. T.A.

Wisdom through meditation *V.73*

Wisdom through meditation comes from experiential cultivation of what has been understood and gaining incontrovertible personal realization of the actual nature of reality. It means coming to an internal resolution, release from the bonds of existence and non-existence and witnessing ultimate reality directly, face to face. Having eliminated the (attachment to the ideas of the) two extremes through learning and contemplation, when you experience (the nature of reality) through meditation, you see all external objects perceived by the five senses as immaterial, empty forms, according to the eight similes of illusion: [586]

While not existing, they are experienced in deluded perception, like a dream. Through the dependent arising of different causes and conditions, they appear incidentally, like an enchantment. They appear to be existent whereas they are not, like an optical illusion. They do not truly exist as they look, like a mirage. They appear while not being either outside or inside, like an echo. Without any (material) support or anything supported, they are like a city in the sky. Appearing but without any inherent existence, they are like images in a mirror. Appearing as all kinds of visions and hallucinations, they are like an apparitional city.

Once you have understood external appearances to be deceptive, you turn your attention towards the perceiver and examine the nature of the mind. In this way, although appearances continue to arise in the mind, there is no more conceptual fixation on objects. You have arrived at realization of the actual nature of things – empty and luminous as the sky.

This is the perfection of wisdom.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', pp.410–11, trans. T.A.

Dependent arising

Meditation on the aspects of dependent arising *V.74*

The passage below from Gampopa's 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation' presents a set of meditations on dependent arising as the antidote for delusion. They involve going through the twelve links of dependent arising (see heading above Th.156) first in the forward order, and then reviewing them in the backward order. This is the very method by which the Buddha himself attained awakening and liberation from saṃsāra (Udāna *1).*

If you are dominated by delusion, then meditate on dependent aris-

586 Cf. M.142–437.

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ing[587] as its antidote. The 'Rice Seedling Sūtra'[588] says: 'The monk who knows (the nature of) this rice seedling knows dependent arising. The one who knows dependent arising knows the Dharma. The one who knows the Dharma knows the Buddha.'[589]

There are two meditations: (1) on the forward order (of conditions), the dependent arising of saṃsāra and (2) on the backward order, the dependent arising of nirvana.

(1) The first one consists of two parts: (1.1) external dependent arising and (1.2) internal dependent arising. The latter consists of two: (1.2.1) the causal factors of internal dependent arising and (1.2.2) the supporting conditions of internal dependent arising.

(1.2.1) *The causal factors of internal dependent arising.* As it is said, 'Monks, since this exists, that becomes. Because this arises, that also arises. It goes like this: Conditioned by (1) ignorance (misperception, unawareness), (2) volitional activities arise ... Conditioned by (11) birth, ageing and death arise – as well as sorrow, lamentation, pain, unhappiness and distress. That is how all this great bundle of suffering comes into being.'

The twelve links of dependent arising are presented in terms of the realm of sensual desire[590] and in terms of birth from a womb.

(1) At the very first, there is 'ignorance', which is delusion about what is to be known.

(2) Ignorance motivates volitional activities with intoxicating inclinations, which can be wholesome, unwholesome or invariant.[591] Thus, 'conditioned by ignorance, volitional activities arise.'

(3) The mind carrying that seed of action is the 'consciousness' conditioned by volitional activities.

(4) By the force of action, the mind falls into error. Then it gets conceived in a mother's womb, and turns into a creamy mass and so forth.[592] That is 'mind and body' conditioned by consciousness.

(5) As that mind and body develops, the eyes and ears and the rest of the senses become complete. Those are the 'six sense-bases' conditioned by mind and body.

(6) The meeting and interaction of the eye and other senses with their respective objects and the consciousness is sensory contact conditioned by the six sense-bases.

(7) As sensory contact arises, feeling occurs, which is experienced as pleasure, pain or indifference. That is 'feeling' conditioned by sensory contact.

587 See Th.156ff.

588 The *Śālistamba*, one of the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtra*s and is the main scriptural source for the Mahāyāna teaching on dependent arising: see M.130.

589 See Th.165, Th.2 and M.131.

590 See 'three realms' in Glossary.

591 The traditional Tibetan descriptions of this type of karma give it as always, invariantly ripening in the higher realms (form or formless realms), whereas wholesome and unwholesome types of karma can vary as to whether they ripen in the lower or higher of the six states of the realm of sensual desire. Thus the wholesome/unwholesome quality of the karma can vary from the overall wholesome/unwholesome quality of the realm they ripen in, whereas this is not the case with invariant karma.

592 This refers to the stages of embryonic development.

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(8) Enjoyment of the feeling experienced, as well as attachment and clinging to it is 'craving' conditioned by feeling.

(9) Not letting go of the object of attachment, not wishing to be separated from it but striving for it repeatedly is 'grasping' conditioned by craving.

(10) Striving in this way through body, speech and mind, action leading to another rebirth is activated. That is 'way of being' conditioned by grasping.

(11) The manifestation of those five categories of existence which are born from that action is 'birth' conditioned by way of being.

(12) The development and maturation of the categories of existence which are manifested from birth is 'aging', and their destruction is 'death', both being conditioned by birth. 'Sorrow' is the internal torment associated with clinging and attachment due to delusion at the time of death. 'Lamentation' is a verbal expression arising from sorrow. 'Pain' is any unpleasant feeling related to the five types of consciousness (related to the bodily senses). 'Unhappiness' is mental pain related to mental activity. Finally, 'distress' refers to all the rest of the subsidiary afflictions of that kind.

The twelve links can be divided into three groups. The threefold ignorance, craving and grasping comprise defilement. Volitional activities and way of being – these two are action. Consciousness and the remaining six links are the painful. This is what is also said in the 'Middle Way Dependent Arising' (by Nāgārjuna[593]): 'What has been described by the sage (Buddha) as the twelve links of dependent arising can be divided into three groups: defilement, action and the painful (results of defilement and action). They are all included in these three. The first, eighth, and ninth are defilement, the second and tenth are action, and the remaining seven are the painful.'

Furthermore, to provide examples:[594] ignorance is like one who plants the seed, action is like the field, consciousness is like the seed, craving is like moisture, mind and body are like shoots. The rest are like branches, leaves and so forth.

If ignorance did not arise, there would be no volitional activities either. Likewise, if there was no birth, neither would there be ageing and death. However, since there is ignorance, volitional activities manifest; and inasmuch as there is birth, so ageing and death also come about. Thus, all the twelve links depend on each other.

Moreover, ignorance does not think: 'I will create volitional activities', neither do volitional activities think: 'We are created by ignorance.' Likewise, birth does not think: 'I am going to bring about ageing and death', and ageing and death do not think, 'We were created by birth.' However, when there is ignorance, volitional activities do manifest and occur; and likewise when there is birth, then ageing and death also do manifest and take place. Internal dependent arising should thus be regarded as a sequence of conditions.

(1.2.2) *Supporting conditions of internal dependent arising.* Moreover, internal dependent arising is also supported by conditions, because the

593 Nāgārjuna's explanation of dependent arising based on the 'Rice Seedling *Sūtra*'.
594 Cf. Th.164.

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body-mind is comprised of six elements: earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness. That which forms the solidity of the body is called the earth element. That which causes the body to cohere is the water element. That which digests all food and drink is the fire element. That which causes the inhalation and exhalation of breath is the wind element. The interior cavity of the body is called the space element. Lastly, the five kinds of sensory consciousness and mind-consciousness having intoxicating inclinations comprise what is called the consciousness element. The six elements do not think: 'I form the solidity – and so forth – of the body.' The body also does not think, 'I was created by these conditions.' Yet, when these conditions are present, they give rise to the body.

Furthermore, how many lifetimes does it take to complete the twelve links of dependent arising? The 'Noble Ten Stages Sūtra' says: 'Volitional activities conditioned by ignorance' – this refers to the past. Consciousness through to feeling take place in the present life. Craving and so forth through to way of being are related to the future. Then it just goes on and on.'

(2) *The dependent arising of (the experience of) nirvana in reverse order.* When one realizes the actual nature (*dharmatā*) of all phenomena as emptiness, then ignorance ceases. When that ceases, everything respectively ceases until ageing and death. As the Buddha said, 'When ignorance ceases, then volitional activities cease, and so forth. When birth ceases, then ageing, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, unhappiness, and distress all cease. Thus all this great bundle of suffering ceases.'

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.257–62, trans. T.A.

Insight into the lack of identity: non-selfness

In the Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna it is said that one needs to realize the twofold lack of identity (or lack of self-essence): of both persons and other phenomena. They cannot be found as unitary, independent entities. It is said that our ordinary sense of having a self is merely an imputation upon, and a misinterpretation of, the impermanent flux of the five categories of existence – physical form, feeling, and so forth. Thus one needs to realize that persons lack a findable identity. In addition, it is said that one also needs to realize that the impermanent flux of the phenomena of the five categories of existence also lack such identity. If one analyses these phenomena, they also cannot be found as unitary, findable entities with their own identity. Thus, it is said that both persons and the phenomena of the five categories lack identity.

V.75 Meditation on the lack of personal identity, or self-essence

The next two passages introducing meditation on the lack of identity are extracted from the seventeenth chapter of Gampopa's 'The Jewel Ornamentation of Liberation', which deals with the perfection of wisdom. The first passage refutes the idea of a permanent personal identity, which is the cause of every mental defilement. The arguments deployed in the passage derive

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from the works of Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Madhyamaka philosophical school.[595]

Every 'thing' or apprehension of a thing is included in two 'identities', and both of those 'identities' are empty of inherent existence. So what are these two identities? They are 'personal identity' and 'phenomenal identity'.

And what is a 'personal identity'? It can be defined in several ways, but actually a 'person' is a continuum of the grasped-at categories of existence [596] having awareness. The 'Fragment Sūtra' says: 'This continuum is called a "person".' To apprehend this 'person' as something permanent and unitary (which it is not), and then to identify with it and cling to it – this is what is called (having the idea of) a 'personal identity'. (The idea of) this (false) identity then gives rise to defilement. Defilement in turn engenders action and action brings about suffering. Thus all suffering and every trouble is rooted in that (false sense of) identity. That is also what the Commentary says: 'Once there is oneself, there are also others and then, based on liking oneself and disliking others, one gets involved in relationships, which ends up causing a lot of trouble.'[597]

Now, what is 'phenomenal identity'? A 'phenomenon' is either an external, apprehended object or an internal, apprehending mind. Why are they called 'phenomena (*dharmas*)'? Because 'they hold their own characteristics'. The 'Fragment Sūtra' also says: 'That which holds its own characteristics is called a 'phenomenon'.[598] Thus, to apprehend both object and subject *as something*, and to cling to them – this is what is called (having the idea of) 'phenomenal identity'.[599]

Now, in order to explain why both identities are empty of inherent existence, first I shall refute (the inherent existence of) a personal identity. As Master Nāgārjuna says in his *Precious Garland*, 'To say that "I" and "mine" exist is ultimately wrong' (RV 28a). [600] This means that such a personal identity is ultimately not attested. If such an identity – the 'I' – were ultimately attested to exist truly, then it should also exist at the time of seeing the truth. Since, however, there is no such identity at the time of seeing the truth, it is not attested. The 'Precious Garland' also says: 'Because as one fully understands things the way they are, neither of them arises' (RV 28b). To 'understand things the way they are' means to see the truth. 'Neither of them arises' means that no apprehension of 'I' or 'mine' arises.

595 See M.138.The main reference is the 'The Precious Garland' (*Ratnāvalī*), a poetic letter of advice to a Buddhist monarch (RV), from which V.12 is an extract.

596 The kinds of phenomena one identifies with as 'I' (see Th.151).

597 Source unknown.

598 The traditional Buddhist definition of a '*dharma*' according to the Abhidharma system. It is precisely the idea of 'own characteristic' (*svalakṣaṇa*) and 'inherent nature' (*svabhāva*) which the philosophical schools of the Mahāyāna deny and refute.

599 As can be seen from the analogy with 'personal identity', 'phenomenal identity' is false identification (or reification) of *things* – whether external, material or internal, mental – as inherently existent, fixed identities. Furthermore, it is related to 'dualistic perception' – or apprehension – of a truly existing object as separate from a truly existent mind apprehending it.

600 Cf. M.135. 'Mine' refers to the apprehension (or appropriation) of any of the 'categories of existence' as belonging to 'me'.

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Furthermore, if such an identity existed, then it should be produced either from itself, or something else, or both, or from (anything in) the three times. Let us investigate this!

It cannot be produced from itself, because either it already exists or it does not. If it does not already exist, then it cannot be a cause. If it does already exist, then it cannot be its own result. Thus there is a contradiction in an identity producing itself.

It also cannot be produced from something else because that cannot be a cause. How is that? A 'cause' depends on a 'result'. As long as there is no result, there cannot be a cause. When there is no cause, then no result can be produced, just as seen before. It also cannot be produced from both itself and something else, because both positions are problematic, as we have just shown.[601]

It also cannot arise from (anything in) the three times. It cannot arise from the past because the past is like a rotten seed, its potency exhausted. It cannot arise from the future because then it would be just as non-existent as the child of a barren woman. It also cannot arise from the present because the assistant (cause) and the assisted (result) cannot exist together. Therefore, the 'Precious Garland' says: 'Since it cannot arise from itself, or from other, or from both, or from (anything in) the three times, grasping at a self is ended' (RV 37).

Or, it can also be understood in the following way: Investigate whether your (personal) 'identity' exists in your body, in your mind, or in your name. This body is composed of the four elements. The solidity of the body is earth, its moisture is water, its heat is fire, and its breath and motility are wind. Therefore, there is no (personal) identity among these four elements, just as there is no such identity amongst the four external elements: earth, water, and so forth.

Do you think that such an identity exists in your mind? Well, the mind is nowhere to be found, since it cannot be seen by either yourself or others.[602] If even your mind cannot be found, how could a personal identity exist in it?

Do you think that your identity exists in your name? Well, your name is just a spurious designation, it is nothing substantial, and has nothing to do with your identity. Thus we have presented three logical arguments to show that a personal identity does not exist.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.275–78, trans. T.A.

V.76 Meditation on emptiness or the lack of phenomenal identity

The meditation on the absence of a 'phenomenal identity' begins with a critique of the idea that there is a material reality composed of indivisible atomic particles. This leads to the conclusion that the outside world is a mental projection – the philosophical position of the Citta-mātra ('Mind-only') school (cf. M.142–43). It then moves on to a Madhyamaka critique of the idea that 'mind' as a concrete, observable entity exists. The point of these arguments is to establish

601 A detailed refutation of inherent production from self, other, both, and neither can be found in ch.1 of Nāgārjuna's main philosophical work, the 'Fundamental Verses in the Middle Way' (*Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā:* MMK)

602 See V.76

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a 'middle way' understanding of emptiness as the absence of fixed and solid identities.

The refutation of a phenomenal identity consists of two parts: (1) Showing that external, apprehended objects lack (substantial, or inherent) existence (2) Showing that the internal, apprehending mind lacks (such an) existence.

1. The lack of (substantial) existence of external apprehended objects. Some (Buddhist schools) assert external, apprehended objects to be substantially existent. According to the Vaibhāṣikas,[603] there is a fundamental particle, globular and partless, which is a substance. Visible objects – and so forth – are agglomerations of such particles. The individual particles surround each other with intervals, and presently seem to be in one piece, like a yak-tail or a green meadow. They do not fall apart but are held together by the actions (karma) of sentient beings. According to the Sautrāntikas,[604] the particles surround each other without intervals and stick together without actually touching. [605]

Despite such assertions, there can be no such (material) substance. For is a particle unitary or is it multiple? If it is unitary, can it be divided into parts or not? If it can be divided into parts, then it segregates into six – eastern, western, southern, northern, upper, and lower – portions, which undermines the assertion that it is unitary. If a particle cannot be divided into parts, then everything would necessarily have to be included in one single particle – which also is obviously not the case. In this regard, the 'Twenty Stanzas' (by Vasubandhu) says, 'If a single particle could have six aspects, then the smallest would consist of six parts. If all six were occupying the same place, then the whole mass would collapse into just one particle'.[606]

If you think that particles are multiple, consider the following: If one single particle were found to exist, then it might be possible to prove the existence of manifold agglomerations of single particles. But since such an entity has not been found, manifold agglomerations of them are also impossible. The smallest fundamental particle, therefore, is not substantially existent, so external objects composed of them cannot exist either.

So, if you think, 'What is this world which appears and is present to my senses?', it is nothing but your own mind, which mistakenly appears as an outside world. Since it appears like that to your own mind, it is an appearance.

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603 One of the Abhidharma schools of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism, also known as the Sarvāstivāda.

604 Another early school, which critiqued the Sarvāstivāda.

605 Though modern science has developed structural models of matter which are apparently much more subtle than these 'primitive' ideas, inasmuch as matter is still conceived to consist of substantial particles – however minute – the following argument still holds valid. (Though the notion of matter as a form of energy is much closer to the Buddhist view.)

606 *Viṃśatika-kārikā* 12. The 'Twenty Stanzas' of Vasubandhu are the *locus classicus* for the Cittamātra position that the external world is nothing but mental projection (or on another interpretation, that our concepts of an 'external world' are deeply faulty, and we only ever actually experience mental phenomena). It is also known as *Vijñaptimātra-siddhi*, 'Proving Cognition-only'. For an English translation, see S. Anacker, *Seven Works of Vasubandhu* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984) pp.413–421.

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How do we know that this is the case? It can be known through scripture, reasoning, and simile.

1. Scripture. The 'Garland of Buddhas Sūtra' says: 'Oh, Sons of the Victorious One! The three realms are only mind.' Also, the 'Descent into Laṅkā' says: 'The mind stirred up by latencies appears as a world of external objects. It isn't real though, but is the mind itself; the external world is a mistaken vision.'

2. Reasoning. The thesis is that the external world is the appearance of a confused mind. The reason is that whatever appears and is present (to the senses) lacks (substantial) existence – like a man's horn or a tree visualized in meditation. Likewise, because things do not appear as they really are; because these appearances change through the force of conditions; because they come and go by the power of imagination; and because there are different appearances for the six types of beings, the external world is just an appearance of a confused mind.

3. Simile. It is like a dream, an illusion, and so forth. Thus we have shown that external, apprehended objects are non-existent.

2. The lack of existence of an internal, apprehending mind. Certain Buddhists – solitary-buddhas and proponents of the Mind-only School (Cittamātrins) – assert that the mind exists as something that is aware of itself, something that illuminates itself. Despite such claims, there are three reasons which prove that such mind does not really exist:[607] (1) when the mind is analysed into moments, it is found not to exist. (2) Since the mind is imperceptible, it does not actually exist, (3) Since there are no objects (for it to know), no mind can exist.

1. Momentary analysis. Does this mind that is allegedly aware of itself and which is supposed to illuminate itself exist for one moment or for several moments?[608] If it exists for one moment, then does it have any past, present and future aspects or not? If it does, then it cannot be for just one moment, but rather, it has to be several. That is also what the 'Precious Garland' says: 'Just as a moment has an end, likewise, it has a beginning and middle as well. Since a single moment is thus analysed into three, the world does not exist for (even) one single moment' (RV 69). If the moment does not have any past, present and future aspects, then it cannot exist at all. Therefore, since no single moment exists, the mind cannot exist either.

If you think that the mind can exist for several moments, then consider this: If a single moment existed, then from the accumulation of single moments several moments might also come to existence. But,

607 For a Mādhyamika, such claims are tanamount to asserting an inherently existent moment of mind, and that makes them (Cittamātrins and Yogācārins) targets for their refutations.

608 Traditional Abhidharma, of the pre-Mahāyāna schools (and also of the Cittamātra according to the Madhyamaka school), saw mind as consisting of a stream of momentary occurrences of the *dharma* 'mind/awareness' (*citta*) and various accompanying mental qualities. The critique here is directed at the idea of a 'single moment': if it can be divided into three aspects (arising, stasis, decay), it is not really a single moment, and it if takes literally no time at all, in what sense does it exist? It is argued that the problem with the idea of a 'moment' lasting three brief sub-moments is that these would divide again into three sub-sub-moments – and so on *ad infinitum*.

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since a single moment does not exist, neither can exist several moments from their accumulation. Since there are no several moments of mind, the mind cannot exist (as a linear temporal sequence).[609]

2. The mind is imperceptible. Search for this so-called 'mind'! Does it abide outside the body, within the body, or somewhere in between? Is it somewhere up or down? Investigate whether it has any shape or colour. Search until you reach conviction, and search according to the oral instructions of your teacher, shifting the order of observations and so forth. If no matter how you search for it you cannot find it, it is because there is nothing to see; it has no colour or any concrete characteristics at all. It is not that you cannot find something that (nevertheless) exists. The seeker that is searching for itself – that is the one that does the searching – is beyond the domain of the intellect; beyond anything that can be expressed or thought of.[610] That is why it cannot be found, however you search for it. As the 'Kāśyapa Request Sūtra' says: 'Kāśyapa, the mind cannot be found either inside or outside, or in between. Kāśyapa, the mind cannot be analysed, indicated or discovered. It is invisible, imperceptible, and nowhere to be found. Kāśyapa, the mind has not been seen, is not seen, and will not be seen even by any of the Buddhas.'

Also, the 'Apprehending the True Dharma Sūtra' says: 'So, when you have fully recognized that the mind is a hollow dummy, do not think of it as essential, because it is empty of an essential core. Something that is empty of essence cannot (substantially) exist at all; everything is just a designation, its nature thus clearly revealed. Overcome the two extremes (belief that things have substantial existence, and belief that they are totally non-existent), if you can, and always remain in the middle. (Insight into) the emptiness of inherent existence of phenomena is the path to awakening, and thus have I taught it as well.' The 'Unwavering Dharmatā Sūtra' also says: 'All phenomena are inherently unborn, essentially non-abiding, free from all limitation of actions and deeds, beyond the domains of conceptuality and non-conceptuality.'

Therefore, since the mind has not been seen by anyone, it is meaningless to describe it as something that is aware of itself, illuminating itself. As it says in 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening', 'If no-one has ever seen the mind, then it is meaningless to discuss whether it is luminous (*prabhāsvara*[611]) or not. It is like discussing the beauty of a barren women's daughter' (BCA IX.22). Moreover, as Tilopa says: 'Behold self-knowing wisdom! It is beyond the ways of speech, not an object of mind'[612].

609 This refutation of 'mind' actually refutes the notion of 'mind-stream' conceived as a one-directional linear sequence of mental events – a notion found in the Abdhidharma.

610 While searching for itself, the mind transcends the intellect, and realizes its own non-conceptual nature.

611 Cf. Th.124 and M.111.

612 Tilopa was an Indian Tantric *mahāsiddha*, who is considered an important 'root-guru' in the Kagyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism. The statement quoted from of his *dohās* (songs of accomplishment) expresses the non-conceptual nature of non-dual, 'self-knowing wisdom' (*svasaṃvedanā-jñāna*) or Buddha-mind.

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3. Since there are no objects (for it to know), no mind can exist. As has been explained above, external objects, such as visible forms and so forth, do not exist. Therefore, an internal mind which apprehends them also cannot exist. The 'Showing the Indivisible Nature of the Expanse of Phenomena Sūtra' says: 'Consider one by one whether the mind is blue, yellow, red, white, crimson, or the colour of crystal. Is it pure or impure? Can it be called permanent or impermanent? Does it have form or is it without form? The mind does not have any form, cannot be indicated, is invisible, is unobstructed, is imperceptible and does not abide within, without or in between the two, so it is completely pure and utterly without (inherent) existence. It does not need to be liberated because it is the nature of the expanse of phenomena.' Also, 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening' says: 'If there is nothing to know, then who knows? How can we even speak about knowing?' (BCA IX.61). And 'Since there is no object of knowledge present, there can be no knower either' (BCA IX.62).

Thus we have shown the internal, apprehending mind to be lacking (inherent) existence.

In this way, the apprehension of (phenomena) as things (*bhāva*) has been prevented. Now secondly, we are going to prevent their apprehension as 'non-things' (*abhāva*). If those two identities cannot be attested anywhere as anything whatsoever, then the question arises whether they are nothing at all. However, they cannot even be attested as 'non-things'. Why not? If those two identities had been things (in the first place) and then became non-existent, then they could be called 'non-things'. But since there never has inherently existed the phenomena called 'two identities', they are beyond the extremes of something and nothing. As Saraha[613] has said, 'Apprehending things, people act just like cattle; apprehending nothing, they are even more stupid.' Also, the 'Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra' says: 'The external world is neither something, nor nothing. The mind is also unapprehendible. Complete abandonment of all conceptual views – that is the characteristic of the 'unborn (nirvana).' And, as the 'Precious Garland' says: 'When no "something" has been found, then how could we find "nothing"?' (RV 98).

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.278–84, trans. T.A.

613 Saraha was another Indian siddha-guru, just like Tilopa.

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CHAPTER 10

THE GOALS OF BUDDHISM

THERAVĀDA

Happiness in this and future lives

As previously seen, Buddhism regards rebirth in the human realm as rare and precious (Th.59–60), accepts the reality of many heavenly realms (end of L.27, Th.58), and sees both of these kinds of rebirth as the fruits of wholesome actions. Such actions also lead to harmonious relationships with others (e.g.Th.49) along with meditative tranquillity and joy (Th.139, 140, 155). All of these are amongst the goals of Buddhist practice. However, the final goal is to attain nirvana, so as to go beyond any future rebirths and the pains that these bring.

Definitive spiritual breakthroughs

One who attains the destruction of the defilements which lead to future rebirths is known as an arahant (see *Th.205–211). He or she has access to a direct experience of nirvana during this life, and at death attains final nirvana. Other 'noble ones' (see Th.199–204) attain different levels of spiritual development which are certain to lead to arahantship within seven lives at most.*

Nirvana

Nirvana (Pāli nibbāna, *Skt* nirvāṇa*) is the goal of Theravāda Buddhism's noble eightfold path. Like dependent arising, it is seen as profound and hard to see (Th.13). It is the 'extinction' of the 'fires' of attachment/lust, hatred and delusion, and of the mental and physical pains that these bring in any form of conditioned existence or rebirth. It is experienced initially in life, when a person becomes an* arahant*, an enlightened person, with the destruction of attachment, hatred and delusion. When an* arahant *dies, there is nirvana beyond death, a state beyond description (*Itivuttaka *38–39).*

The purpose of the holy life ***Th.180***

Here, monks, a certain person of good family who has gone forth from home to a homeless life through faith ... obtains gains, honours and praise. They do not become glad, nor one who has fulfilled their resolve, with those gains and praise. Because of those gains, honours and praises they do not exalt themselves and disparage others, saying 'I am the recipient of gains, honours and praises but these other monks are less known little esteemed.' ... They do not become intoxicated, negligent, and heedless. Being heedful they succeed in achieving ethical discipline. Because of this success in achieving ethical discipline, they become glad, but are not one who has fulfilled their resolve. ... They do not exalt themselves and disparage others. ...

Being heedful they attain success in achieving meditative concentration. Because of this success in achieving concentration they be-

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come glad, but are not one who has fulfilled their resolve ... Being heedful they attain knowing and seeing. Because of this knowing and seeing they become glad, but are not one who has fulfilled their resolve. Because of this knowing and seeing they do not exalt themselves and disparage others. ... Being heedful they succeed in obtaining enduring release. Monks, there is no way, and it is not possible that this monk will fall away from that enduring release.

Monks it is like a man wanting heartwood, seeking for heartwood, who goes about in search for heartwood, who came to a great tree standing possessing heartwood, who cuts out the heartwood itself ... [rather than any lesser part of the tree] and takes it away knowing that it is the heartwood and whatever use there is of the heartwood for him, that he partakes of.

Thus, monks, this holy life is not for the benefit of gains, honours and praise, not for the benefit of (only) achievement of ethical discipline, not for the benefit of achievement of meditative concentration, not for the benefit of knowing and seeing. Monks, the purpose of this holy life, the pith of it, the ultimate goal of it, is this unshakable release of mind.

Mahā-sāropama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.193–198, trans. P.D.P. and P.H.

Th.181 Nirvana as the destruction of attachment, hatred and delusion

In its simplest sense, nirvana is the destruction of the defilements.

Friend Sāriputta, it is said "nirvana, nirvana". What is nirvana?' 'Friend, nirvana is the destruction of attachment, the destruction of hatred and the destruction of delusion.'

Nibbāna Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.251, trans. P.D.P.

Th.182 Synonyms for nirvana

This passage characterises the goal of the path primarily as 'the unconditioned/unconstructed' (asaṅkhata)*, in the form of the 'destruction of attachment, hatred and delusion' and then gives various inspiring synonyms for the unconditioned, one of which is nirvana. Elsewhere (Th.23), nirvana is likened to the safe and delightful 'further shore' of a river, the hither shore representing the dangers of* saṃsāra.

Monks, I shall teach you the unconditioned and the path leading to the unconditioned. And what, monks, is the unconditioned? The destruction of attachment, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion: this is called the unconditioned. ...

Monks, I will teach you the uninclined and the path leading to the uninclined ... the without intoxicating inclination ... truth/reality ... the beyond ... the subtle ... the very-hard-to-see ... the undecaying ... the lasting ... the undisintegrating ... the non-manifestive ... the unproliferated ... the peaceful ... the deathless ... the sublime ... the auspicious ... the secure ... the destruction of craving ... the marvellous ... the amazing ... the unailing ... the unailing state ... nirvana ... the unafflicted ... non-attachment... purity ... freedom ... the unclinging... the island (amidst the flood) ... the shelter ... the place of safety ... the refuge ... the destination.

Asaṅkhata saṃyutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.362 and 368–73, trans. P.H.

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Nirvana as the highest bliss *Th.183*

Health is the highest gain. Nirvana is the highest bliss.
The eightfold path is the best of paths, for it leads to the deathless.

Māghandiya Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.508, trans. P.H.

Happy indeed we live, we for whom there are no impediments (attachment, hatred and delusion). Feeders on joy we shall be, like the Radiant Gods.

Dhammapada 200, trans. P.H.

The nature of nirvana *Th.184*

*These linked passages on nirvana portray it, firstly, as beyond 'mind and body' and any world. It is also beyond the 'coming and going' normally associated with being reborn, and as an objectless state that is not 'supported' on anything else. Secondly, it is beyond any craving. Thirdly, it is something that has nothing to do with birth or a way of being, it is not 'made' (*kata*') by karma, and is not conditioned/constructed (*saṅkhata*) by volitional/constructing activities (*saṅkhāras*) or anything else. Fourthly, it is an unagitated, tranquil state beyond any craving-based leaning towards any object of attachment.*

Once the Blessed One was living in Sāvatthī in Jetavana in Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. At that time the Blessed One was instructing the monks, causing them to observe, inspiring and gladdening them with Dhamma-talk connected with nirvana. Those monks there were listening to the teaching, paying attention, their minds directed to it, focusing all their thought on it and lending their ear. At that time the Blessed One observed this matter and uttered the following paeans of joy:

'Monks, there exists that sphere where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind;[614] neither the sphere of the infinity of space, nor the infinity of consciousness, nor the sphere of nothingness, nor the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception;[615] neither this world nor the other world, nor both sun and moon. And there, monks, I speak neither of coming nor of going, nor of staying, nor of falling away, nor of arising (in a new rebirth); it is really unsupported, lacking in continued temporal existence, and objectless. This truly is the end of the painful.' ...

'Difficult to see is that which does not incline to anything (due to craving). The truth is not easy to see. They have penetrated into craving and for them who know and see, there is nothing (to hold on to).'...

'Monks, there exists the not born, not come into being, not made, and not constructed. Had there not been the not born, not come into being, not made, not constructed, there would not be made known, here, an escape from that which is born, come into being, made, and constructed. It is because there is the not born, not come into being, not made, and not constructed that there is made known escape from the born, come into being, made, and constructed.' ...

'There is instability for one who is attached. There is no instability

614 The four basic elements of material form.

615 The four formless meditative levels and corresponding realms of existence, beyond even subtle form.

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for one who is not attached. When there is no instability, there is tranquillity. When there is tranquillity, there is no leaning (due to craving). When there is no leaning, there is no coming and going. When there is no coming and going, there is no falling away and arising. When there is no falling away and arising, one is neither here, nor elsewhere, nor in-between the two. This verily, is the end of the painful.'

The first, second, third and fourth *Nibbāna-paṭisaṃyutta Suttas: Udāna* 80–81, trans. P.D.P.

Th.185 Nirvana as deathless and timeless

These passages firstly emphasize nirvana as that which is 'deathless', i.e. beyond anything to do with birth or death, and secondly that it is not caused by the path that enables a person to come to realize it, and is not anything that arises: hence it is not something that exists forever in time, *but is beyond time and the limitations of temporal, conditioned phenomena.*

He turns his mind away from those states [the five categories of existence, seen as impermanent, painful, and non-Self] and directs it towards the deathless element: 'This is the peaceful, this is the sublime ... nirvana.'

Mahā-mālunkyaputta Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.435–436, trans. P.H.

'Even so, sire, it is possible to point out a path to the realization of nirvana, but it is impossible to show a cause for the arising of nirvana. For what reason? Due to the unconditionedness of the Dhamma.'

'Venerable Nāgasena, is nirvana unconditioned?' 'Yes, sire, nirvana is unconditioned; it is not made by anything. One cannot say of nirvana, sire, that it has arisen, or that it has not arisen, or that it is arisable, or that it is past or future or present, or that it is discernible by the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue or the body.'

'If so, Venerable Nāgasena, ... nirvana is something that does not exist, nirvana is not.' 'Nirvana exists, sire. Nirvana is discernible by the mind. A noble disciple, practising rightly, with a mind that is purified, exalted, straight, without obstructions, without worldly concerns, sees nirvana.'

Milindapañha 270, trans. P.H.

Th.186 Nirvana and consciousness

This passage sees the pleasure-seeking involvement of consciousness with the other four aspects of a person as providing a basis or supporting objects for it to flow on into another rebirth. Without attachment to these aspects, or even to the very flow of consciousness, it becomes so content and calm that the volitional or karmic activities that normally accompany it cease, and a person attains nirvana, with no consciousness flowing into another rebirth. An interesting feature of this passage is that this liberated kind of consciousness is said to be 'unsupported' and without an 'object', just as Th.184 says nirvana itself is.

Involved with material form, monks, a persisting consciousness would persist; with material form as object (or basis), with material form as support, with devotion to pleasure, it would come to growth, increase and abundance. Involved with feeling ... perception ... the volitional activities ... abundance.

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Were one to say, monks, 'Apart from material form, apart from feeling, from perception, from the volitional activities, I will show forth the coming and going of consciousness, or its falling away and rebirth, or the growth, increase and abundance of consciousness': that is not appropriate.

If attachment for the element of material form, monks, is abandoned by a monk, by that abandonment of attachment, its object is cut off, and there is no support for consciousness. So also for attachment to the elements of feeling, perception, the volitional activities and (ordinary) consciousness.

That unsupported consciousness has no increase, and is without volitional activities, released; by being released, it is steady; by being steady, it is content; by being content, he is not disturbed; not being disturbed he personally attains nirvana.

Upaya[616] *Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya* III.53–54, trans. P.H.

Nirvana and non-manifestive, radiant consciousness — *Th.187*

This passage has the Buddha apparently putting a kind of consciousness in the position normally taken by nirvana, though the commentary on the passage interprets 'consciousness' in the first line as referring to nirvana as something to be known by consciousness. Note that in passage Th.182, the 'non-manifestive' or 'invisible' (anidassana) *is one of the synonyms for the 'unconditioned' and 'nirvana'. Moreover, the non-manifestive consciousness seems to be equated with a consciousness that has undergone 'stopping' or 'cessation'* (nirodha). *While this passage talks of a radiant consciousness, a passage on a 'stopped' consciousness* (Saṃyutta-nikāya *II.102*) *talks of it as like a beam of light that does not settle on any limiting object. The implications of these passages have been much debated by Buddhists, as most Theravādins see all forms of consciousness as impermanent and conditioned (which may be the meaning of* Saṃyutta-nikāya *III.25), and thus not nirvana.*

Consciousness, non-manifestive, infinite, completely radiant.[617]
– Here it is that earth, water, fire and wind have no footing.
Here long and short, coarse and fine, foul and lovely (have no footing),
Here name and form[618] are stopped without remainder.
– With the stopping of consciousness, here, this is stopped.

Kevaṭṭa[619] *Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya* I.223, trans. P.H.

An *arahant* beyond death — *Th.188*

As with the Buddha, the state of an arahant *beyond death is left undefined (Th.10, 11, 21). One cannot say he 'is', 'is not', 'both is and is not' or 'neither is nor is not'. Whatever his state, it is beyond existence in time. This verse was said by the Buddha on the death of the* arahant *Bāhiya.*

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616 In some manuscript traditions, *Upāya*.
617 Though in some manuscripts, *pabhaṃ* ('radiant') reads *pahaṃ*, which may mean 'accessible from all round'.
618 This probably refers to the 'name-and-form' that comprise the fourth link in dependent arising, conditioned by consciousness: see heading above Th.156, where the less literal translation 'mind and body' is used.
619 Spelled Kevaddha in some manuscript traditions.

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Where water, earth, fire and wind find no footing,
there stars do not shine, nor is the sun apparent,
There the moon appears not, no darkness is there found.
So when the sage knows by himself, a brahmin by his sage-hood,
Then he is freed from form and the formless, from pleasure and from pain.

Bāhiyena Sutta: Udāna 9, trans. P.H.

MAHĀYĀNA

Happiness in this and future lives

Mahāyāna Buddhists, like Theravāda Buddhists, see wholesome actions as leading to greater happiness in this life, and to good rebirths. The central emphasis on compassion, though, means that a great deal of emphasis is placed on actions that bring happiness to, and reduce the suffering of, other people, other beings. The person who takes the path of the bodhisattva *is even willing to forego heavenly rebirths in order to work in this world to benefit others, and is likewise even willing to be reborn in a hell so as to be able to aid beings there.*

There is also the idea that certain heavenly Buddhas, especially Amitābha, have prepared 'Pure Lands', where the conditions are inspiring, wonderful, conducive to great happiness, and ideal for attaining awakening. Rebirth in such a realm is seen to require great faith, but also draws on the saving power of the relevant Buddha. Many ordinary Buddhists in East Asia aspire for rebirth in such a realm.

Definitive spiritual breakthroughs

*For a Mahāyāna Buddhist, the arising of the awakening-mind (*bodhi-citta*), as a deep aspiration to attain Buddhahood, for the sake of other suffering beings, is a key moment of spiritual development. Then there is the 'path of seeing', where a direct insight into the empty but amazing nature of reality, brings a person to the first of the ten stages of the path of the noble* bodhisattva. *At around stage seven of this path, a person reaches a level akin to that of the* arhant. *At the end of the hugely long* bodhisattva *path, perfect Buddhahood itself beckons.*

Nirvana

M.151 **Nirvana is permanent, but it is neither the annihilation nor the eternal existence of one who attains it**

This passage emphasizes that of the four Truths of the Noble Ones, only the third, which is equivalent to nirvana, is permanent. It goes on to describe how ordinary people misunderstand Buddhist teachings and deny the rebirth of the unawakened, see nirvana as eternal existence, and also see the flow of momentary consciousnesses in life as a permanent entity.

Blessed One, among these four Truths of the Noble Ones, three are impermanent, and one is permanent. Why is this? It is because three

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of them are conditioned, and anything which is conditioned is impermanent. Anything which is impermanent is deceptive in nature. Anything which is deceptive in nature is untrue, impermanent, and not a refuge. Therefore, the Truths of the Noble Ones – what is painful, its origination, and the path – are not ultimate reality. They are impermanent. They are not refuges.

Only one of the Truths of the Noble Ones, the cessation of what is painful, is not conditioned, and is therefore permanent. Anything which is permanent is not deceptive in nature. Anything which is not deceptive in nature is really true and permanent. It is a refuge. Therefore, the Truths of the Noble Ones that is the cessation of what is painful is the ultimate reality.

The reality of cessation is inconceivable. It passes beyond the reach of the conscious mind of all living beings, and neither is it within the realm of understanding of any arhant or solitary-buddha. Just as people who are born blind cannot see colour, or a seven-day-old child cannot see the disc of the sun, the reality of cessation is not part of the realm of understanding of the Two Vehicles.[620]

The consciousness of ordinary people is distorted by two wrong views. The understanding of all arhants and solitary-buddhas has been purified. Ordinary people mistakenly adhere to the view that there is an essential self in relation to the five grasped-at categories of existence, and thus give rise to two opposing views, annihilationism and eternalism.[621] These are the extreme views.

Seeing phenomena as impermanent[622] is the annihilationist view, not right view. Seeing nirvana as eternal personal existence is the eternalist view, not right view. Because of deluded wrong views, they make distinctions, they reflect upon the faculties of their bodies and see that they are decaying in this very instant, but they do not see their continuity. Because of this, they hold to the view of annihilationism. Because of deluded wrong views, being blind and foolish, they do not understand, they do not recognize the momentarily discontinuous realm of consciousness in the continuum of the mind. Because of this, they hold to the view of eternalism.[623]

These wrong views towards those objects, which either go too far or do not go far enough, lead one to making mistaken distinctions, and to either eternalism or annihilationism. In the five grasped-at categories of existence, living beings with distorted minds see what is impermanent as permanent, what lacks an essential self as possessing an essential self, what is painful as pleasurable, and what is impure as pure.

Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, Taishō vol.12, text 353, chs.10-12, pp.221c25-222a20; cf. Vol.11, text 310, pp. 677a29-b23, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

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620 Of *arhants* and solitary-buddhas and those who aim at these states.

621 See Th.173.

622 In the sense of coming to an end and not conditioning the arising of similar phenomena.

623 That is, they take the stream of mind-moments as an unchanging mind-substance, and see this as still existent in nirvana.

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M.152 The provisional and the final nirvana

This passage proposes that when the Buddha had taught about nirvana in life and nirvana beyond death as what arhants *attain, he was only giving a provisional teaching, so as to encourage people. The real goal, the real nirvana, is attained on becoming a perfectly awakened Buddha. Thus there is only 'one vehicle' which will take all to the highest goal, not three vehicles leading to becoming an* arhant, *a solitary-buddha, or, at the culmination of the* bodhisattva *path, perfectly awakened Buddhahood.*[624] *The last path is for all.*

Through their skill in means, monks, the Tathāgatas, the arhants of ancient time knew that the realm of living beings was attracted to what is inferior, wallowing in the mud of sensual desire. This, monks, is why the Tathāgata speaks of nirvana, to engage their interest.

Monks, it is as if there were a difficult forest path five hundred leagues in length, and that there were a large group of people who wanted to travel this path to obtain a great treasure. They have a guide who is wise, learned, clever, capable, and skilled in the difficulties of travelling through the forest. He leads the company into the forest, but the people become wearied and exhausted, trembling with fear, and say to him, 'Noble guide, leader, we are wearied and exhausted, trembling with fear from not turning back. We are going to turn back. This difficult forest path is so long!'

Then, monks, the guide who knows the kind of skill in means to apply to people who are turning back, thinks, 'These poor people mustn't fail to obtain the great treasure because of this.' Out of empathy, he applies skill in means and with his supernormal powers manifests a city[625] one hundred, two hundred, or three hundred leagues away in the middle of the forest. He then says to the people, 'Do not be afraid. Do not go back. This is a great country. You can rest here. You can do whatever you need to do here. You can attain nirvana here. Take a stroll here and rest. When you have done what you need to do, you can go on to the great treasure.'

Then, monks, those people astonishingly, miraculously, manage to travel the difficult forest path, and say, 'We are free of this difficult forest path, and we will dwell here in nirvana.' Then, monks, those people enter that city which had been manifested by supernormal powers, and know that they have arrived. They know that they are saved. Then the guide thinks, 'They have been rescued from turning back', and, when he sees that they have rested, he makes the city which he had manifested by means of his supernormal powers disappear. When he has made it disappear, he says to the people, 'Come, good people. The great treasure is nearby. I only manifested this city in order that you could rest.'

In the same way, monks, the Tathāgata, the arhant, the perfectly awakened Buddha is your guide, and the guide of all living beings. This, monks, is how the Tathāgata, the arhant, the perfectly awakened Buddha sees things. There is a great and difficult forest path of the defilements which is to be set out on, traversed, and conquered. If they hear

624 Though some Mahāyāna texts accept the idea of 'three vehicles', with different goals, which some people are attracted to, and genuinely attain.

625 Cf. L.19.

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about the single path of a Buddha, they would not take it seriously, they would not attain final nirvana and pass beyond. Mastering this path of a Buddha involves many hardships. The Tathāgata, therefore, having seen the weakness of living beings, like the guide, manifests a city with his supernormal powers for living beings to rest in. Then, when they have rested, he tells them, 'This city is a manifestation'. In just this way, monks, the Tathāgata, the arhant, the perfectly awakened Buddha, through his great skill in means, has taught and manifested two stages of nirvana along the way for living beings, so that they can rest. These are the stage of the disciple and the stage of the solitary-buddha. When living beings attain these stages, monks, then the Tathāgata declares, 'Monks, you have not accomplished your aim. You have not done what needs to be done, but you are close, monks. You should examine the understanding of the Tathāgata closely, monks. You should consider it carefully. Your nirvana is not, in fact, nirvana. The Tathāgata, monks, the arhant, the perfectly awakened Buddha has declared there to be three vehicles as an application of skill in means. ...

107. So I say to you now, monks, arouse great vigour and energy. You must attain the knowledge of omniscience. You have not yet reached nirvana.

108. When you attain the knowledge of omniscience, the ten powers and the qualities of the Victorious Ones, when you bear the thirty-two bodily characteristics of a Buddha, you will have reached nirvana.

109. The Guides teach in this way, and proclaim nirvana so that living beings might rest. When they know that they have rested, they lead them all on to nirvana, and to the knowledge of omniscience.

Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra, ch.7, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Perfect wisdom shows all is like a dream, including nirvana *M.153*

This passage emphasizes the elusive nature of the truth as conveyed by the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras*: it is beyond words, though it indicates the dream-like nature of everything.*

Some of the gods[626] in the assembly thought to themselves, 'We understand the gossip of the yakṣas,[627] what the yakṣas say, the cries of the yakṣas, the words of the yakṣas, the discussions of the yakṣas, the speech of the yakṣas. We do not, though, understand what the Elder Subhūti says, what he speaks, what he teaches, what he explains.'

The Venerable Subhūti, with his awakened understanding, perceived the thoughts in the minds of those gods, and addressed them, saying, 'There is nothing to be understood, nothing to be understood, gods. Neither is there anything to be pointed out, or anything to be heard.'

The gods then thought, 'May the Noble Subhūti explain this! May the Noble Subhūti explain this! What the Noble Subhūti is going into here is further than far, more subtle than subtle. What the Noble Subhūti is going into, what he is teaching, what he is saying, is more profound than profound.'

—

626 Literally 'sons of the gods'.

627 Mischievous and sometimes malevolent spirit-beings.

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Then the Venerable Subhūti, with his awakened understanding, again perceived the thoughts in the minds of those gods, and addressed them, saying, 'Gods, no-one can attain the fruit of practice which is stream-entry,[628] or remain as a stream-enterer, if they do not patiently accept this elusiveness of the Dharma. No-one can attain the fruit of practice which is once-returnership, remain as a once-returner, attain the fruit of practice which is non-returnership, remain as a non-returner, attain arhantship, remain as an arhant, attain solitary-buddhahood, or remain as a solitary-buddha, if they do not patiently accept this elusiveness of the Dharma. No-one can attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening, or remain in unsurpassed, perfect awakening if they do not patiently accept this elusiveness of the Dharma.'

The gods then thought, 'What should they be like, those who listen to the Noble Subhūti teach the Dharma?'

Then the Venerable Subhūti, with his awakened understanding, again perceived the thoughts in the minds of those gods, and addressed them, saying, 'Those who listen to me teach the Dharma should be like illusions, like conjuror's tricks. Why is this? It is because they will neither listen to anything, nor realize anything.'

The gods then said to the Venerable Subhūti, 'Are living beings which are like illusions not just illusions?'

The Venerable Subhūti then said to the gods, 'Living beings are like illusions, gods. Living beings are like dreams, gods. Illusions and living beings are not two different things, they are not two separate things. Dreams and living beings are not two different things, they are not two separate things. All phenomena, gods, are like illusions, like dreams. A stream-enterer is like an illusion, like a dream. The fruit of practice which is stream-entry is like an illusion, like a dream. In the same way, a once-returner, the fruit of practice which is once-returnership, a non-returner, the fruit of practice which is non-returnership, an arhant, and arhantship, are like illusions, like dreams. A solitary-buddha is like an illusion, like a dream. Solitary-buddhahood is like an illusion, like a dream. A perfectly awakened Buddha is like an illusion, like a dream. Perfect Buddhahood is like an illusion, like a dream.'

The gods then said to the Venerable Subhūti, 'Noble Subhūti, do you say that even a perfectly awakened Buddha is like an illusion, like a dream? Do you say that perfectly awakened Buddhahood is like an illusion, like a dream?'

Subhūti said, 'I say that even nirvana, gods, is like an illusion, like a dream, so other phenomena certainly are.'

The gods said, 'Noble Subhūti, do you say that even nirvana is like an illusion, like a dream?'

The Venerable Subhūti said, 'Gods, if there were any phenomena even more excellent than nirvana, I would say that even that is like an illusion, like a dream. Illusions and nirvana are not two different things, they are not two separate things. Dreams and nirvana are not two different things, they are not two separate things.'

Then, the Venerable Śāriputra, the Venerable Pūrṇa, son of Maitrāyaṇī,

628 See Th.199–202.

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the Venerable Mahā-koṣṭhila, the Venerable Mahā-kātyāyana, the Venerable Mahā-kāśyapa, and other great disciples, along with many thousands of bodhisattvas, addressed the Venerable Elder Subhūti, saying, 'Venerable Subhūti, who will be able to penetrate the perfection of wisdom which you have explained?

The Venerable Ānanda then said to those elders, 'Venerable ones, irreversible bodhisattvas, great beings, individuals with perfect vision, or arhants who have destroyed their intoxicating inclinations will be able to penetrate the perfection of wisdom which has been explained.'

The Venerable Elder Subhūti then said to those elders, 'Venerable ones, no-one will be able to penetrate this perfection of wisdom which has been explained. Why is this? It is because there is no phenomenon to be pointed out, no phenomenon to be illuminated, no phenomenon to be discerned. As there is no phenomenon to be pointed out, no phenomenon to be illuminated, no phenomenon to be discerned here, no-one will be able to penetrate this perfection of wisdom which has been explained.

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, ch.2, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

The Buddha and advanced *bodhisattva* dwell neither in nirvana nor *saṃsāra* — *M.154*

He who sees all dharmas
As identical to nirvana in their essential nature
Sees the Tathāgata
Who ultimately does not dwell anywhere. ...

A great boatman does not remain on this shore, nor on the other shore, nor in the middle of the river, but constantly moves between them so that he can ferry people who are on this shore to the other shore. In the same way, a bodhisattva, a great being, does not remain in the cycle of saṃsāra, nor in nirvana, nor in between, so that he can bring living beings who are on this shore across to the other shore where there is no danger, and no anxiety.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra, Taishō vol.10, text 279, pp.102a05–06 and 107c, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

Buddhahood is for those who struggle amongst the defilements — *M.155*

This passage sees perfectly awakened Buddhahood as attained by those who remain close to beings and their defilements, and compassionately help them forward.

Mañjuśrī said, 'Son of good family, one who dwells with an unwavering vision of the unconditioned will not be able to cultivate the mind which is set on unsurpassed perfect awakening. One who dwells in the conditioned house of the defilements in the truth of no views will be able to cultivate the mind which is set on unsurpassed perfect awakening.

It is like this, son of good family. Sweet-smelling blue lotuses, red lotuses, water lilies, and white lotuses do not grow on arid ground. They grow on muddy river banks.[629] In the same way, son of good family, the

629 Cf. end of Th.5.

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qualities of a Buddha do not grow in those who possess an unwavering vision of the unconditioned. Buddha-qualities grow in living beings who possess the muddy river banks of the defilements. Likewise, seeds do not grow in the sky, they grow in the earth. In the same way, the qualities of a Buddha do not grow in those who possess an unwavering vision of the unconditioned. When one has cultivated a view as great as Mount Meru that an essential self really exists, one will be able to cultivate an awakening-mind.[630] This is what will lead the qualities of a Buddha to grow.

Son of good family, you should understand things according to this teaching. The defilements are the family of the Tathāgatas. Likewise, son of good family, one will not be able to retrieve priceless pearls if one does not venture into the great ocean. In the same way, one will not be able to develop the pearl which is the mind of omniscience if one does not venture into the house of the defilements.'

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.7, section 3, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Buddhahood

M.156 Is Buddhahood an attainment – or is it there already?

This passage is addressed to Maitreya, traditionally seen as the bodhisattva *who will be the next perfectly awakened Buddha on Earth, who will come after the teaching of the historical Buddha has faded away. It proposes that all beings are already awakened, if they did but know it: what they need to do is realize this.*

Maitreya, has the prediction that you will attain awakening come about through the arising of reality or through the cessation of reality? Reality does not arise or cease, nor will it cease. The reality of all living beings is the reality of all phenomena, and that too is the reality of Maitreya. Therefore, if it has been predicted that you will attain awakening, it has been predicted that all living beings will attain awakening. Why is this? It is because reality does not consist of duality or diversity.

Therefore, when Maitreya attains awakening, all living beings will also attain awakening in the same way, at the same time. Why is this? Awakening is the awakening of all living beings. When Maitreya attains final nirvana, all living beings will attain final nirvana. Why is this? It is because the Tathāgatas do not attain final nirvana until all living being have attained final nirvana. The Tathāgatas see those living beings as having attained final nirvana, and as having nirvana as their essential nature. Therefore, Maitreya, do not deceive these sons of the gods. Do not make false assertions.

No-one abides in awakening, or falls from awakening. Maitreya, you should rid these sons of the gods of their views and assumptions about awakening. Awakening is not attained by the body, nor by the mind. Awakening is the cessation of all characteristics. Awakening is not

630 That is, it is those who are deluded who really seek awakening.

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based on anything. Awakening is free of any mental activity. Awakening is the severing of all opinions. Awakening is the absence of all assumptions. Awakening is free from all movement, thinking, and vacillation. Awakening does not rest upon any longing. Awakening is the entrance into freedom from attachments, because it has ceased to take hold of anything. Awakening is stable, because it is grounded in the expanse of phenomena. Awakening conforms to reality. Awakening is the attainment of the ultimate goal.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.3, sections 51–52, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Buddhahood as the omniscient fulfilment of the qualities of a bodhisattva *M.157*

This passage, though, from the same text as above, sees Buddhahood as the full expression of a bodhisattva*'s qualities.*

What is meant by the seat of awakening? ... Son of good family, it is the seat of positive intentions, because it is not artificial. It is the seat of practice, because it is the release of energy. It is the seat of determination, because it has attained distinction. It is the seat of the awakening-mind, because it is not lost.

It is the seat of generosity, because it does not hope for any benefit from its actions. It is the seat of ethical discipline, because it keeps all vows. It is the seat of patient acceptance, because it has no hostile thoughts towards living beings. It is the seat of vigour, because it does not turn back. It is the seat of meditation, because its mind is diligent. It is the seat of wisdom, because it sees what is before it.

It is the seat of loving kindness, because it has a mind of impartiality towards all living beings. It is the seat of compassion, because it can endure discomfort. It is the seat of empathetic joy, because it delights in the pleasures of the Dharma. It is the seat of equanimity, because it has abandoned attachment and aversion.

It is the seat of higher knowledge, because it possesses the six kinds of higher knowledge. It is the seat of emancipation, because it is free of mental constructions. It is the seat of skill in means, because it brings all living beings to maturity. It is the seat of the means of drawing together harmoniously,[631] because it attracts all living beings. It is the seat of learning, because it is the essence of good conduct. It is the seat of profound meditative understanding, because it examines things thoroughly. It is the seat of the practices which help one to attain awakening,[632] because it has abandoned the conditioned and the unconditioned. It is the seat of truth, because it does not make false assertions to anyone in the world. It is the seat of dependent arising, because it has destroyed everything from ignorance to old age and death.[633] It is the seat of the pacification of all defilements, because it is awake to things the way they are.

It is the seat of all living beings, because all living beings lack any essential nature. It is the seat of all phenomena, because it has woken up

631 Giving, endearing speech, helpful conduct, and working together equally towards a common goal.

632 See note to M.10.

633 That is, the twelve conditioning factors, see section introduction before Th.156.

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to emptiness. It is the seat of the defeat of all Māras, because it is unshakeable. It is the seat of the triple world,[634] because it has ended involvement. It is the seat of the vigour that roars a lion's roar because it is not timid or afraid. It is the seat of the powers, the self-confidence, and the special qualities of all the Buddhas, because it is irreproachable in every way. It is the seat of the three kinds of knowledge,[635] because no trace of the defilements remains. It is the seat of the complete, one-pointed understanding of all phenomena, because it has attained the knowledge of omniscience.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.3, sections 54–59, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

M.158 Amitābha Buddha

This passage tells of the wondrous land of Amitābha (Infinite Light)/Amitāyus (Infinite Life) Buddha, rebirth in whose pure Buddha-land can be reached by true faith. It also refers to various other Buddhas throughout the vast universe.

At that time, the Blessed One addressed the Venerable Śāriputra, 'To the west, Śāriputra, there is a Buddha-field named Sukhāvatī, the 'Realm of Happiness', which lies beyond countless hundreds of thousands of other Buddha-fields. At the present time, a Tathāgata, an arhant, a perfectly awakened Buddha named Amitāyus dwells there, teaching the Dharma. ...

Moreover, Śāriputra, in that Buddha-field, there are divine musical instruments which are played constantly. The ground is a delightful golden colour. There, in that Buddha-field, showers of divine māndārava flowers rain down three times each night and three times each day. In the time it takes to eat a single meal, the living beings who are born there travel to other world-systems and honour countless hundreds of thousands of Buddhas. ... Moreover, Śāriputra, in that Buddha-field ... the flocks of birds which sing songs of the Dharma are manifested by the Tathāgata Amitāyus. That Buddha-field, Śāriputra, is adorned with all of these different kinds of wonderful things which one finds in a Buddha-field. Moreover, Śāriputra, in that Buddha-field, when the wind stirs the rows of palm trees and the nets of small bells which adorn them, they make a delightful sound which soothes the mind. ... When the people there hear those sounds, they recollect the Buddha in their bodies, they recollect the Dharma in their bodies, they recollect the Sangha in their bodies. ...

Śāriputra, why do you think that that Tathāgata is known as "Amitāyus", "Infinite Life"? Well, Śāriputra, the lifespan of that Tathāgata and of the people who dwell in his Buddha-field is unlimited. This is why that Tathāgata is known as "Amitāyus", "Infinite Life". That Tathāgata attained unsurpassed perfect awakening ten eons ago.

Śāriputra, why do you think that that Tathāgata is known as "Amitābha", "Infinite Light"? Well, Śāriputra, the light which radiates from that Tathāgata shines unobstructed in all Buddha-fields. This is why that Tathāgata is known as "Amitābha", "Infinite Light". That Tathāgata has an immeasurably large Sangha of disciples who are pure

634 That is, the entirety of conditioned existence: see 'three realms' in Glossary.

635 The knowledge that everything is impermanent, painful, and without an essential self.

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arhants, whose numbers cannot easily be measured. That Buddha-field, Śāriputra, is adorned with all of these different kinds of wonderful things which one finds in a Buddha-field.

Moreover, Śāriputra, the progress of those living beings who are born in the Buddha-field of the Tathāgata Amitāyus as pure bodhisattvas will be irreversible, and they will only experience one more birth. The numbers of these bodhisattvas, Śāriputra, cannot easily be measured. It can only be said that there is an immeasurably large innumerable multitude of them. Living beings, Śāriputra, should cultivate a heartfelt desire for that Buddha-field. Why should they do this? They should do this because in that Buddha-field, they will be in the company of good people such as these bodhisattvas.

Śāriputra, living beings with only a few wholesome roots will not be born in the Buddha-field of the Tathāgata Amitāyus. If a son or daughter of good family hears the name of the Blessed One, the Tathāgata Amitāyus, and if their minds become absorbed by it – for one night, two nights, three nights, four nights, five nights, six nights, or seven nights – if their minds become undistractedly absorbed by it, then when they die the Tathāgata Amitāyus, surrounded by his Sangha of disciples and accompanied by his assembly of bodhisattvas will appear before them, and they will die with an undistorted mind. When they die, they will be born in the Buddha-field of the Tathāgata Amitāyus, in the world-system of Sukhāvatī. Therefore Śāriputra, it is with this purpose in view that I say that a son or daughter of good family should single-mindedly cultivate a heartfelt desire for that Buddha-field in their minds.

Śāriputra, to the east ... to the south, ... to the west, ... to the north, ... to the nadir, ... to the zenith , as many Buddhas, as many Blessed Ones as there are grains of sand in the River Ganges praise their Buddha-fields, in the same terms as I praise Sukhāvatī. ...

Śāriputra, why do you think that this discourse on the Dharma is called "Embraced by all the Buddhas"? Those sons and daughters of good family, Śāriputra, who hear the title of this discourse on the Dharma and who bear in mind the names of those Buddhas, those Blessed Ones, will all be embraced by the Buddhas, and their progress towards unsurpassed, perfect awakening will become irreversible. Therefore, Śāriputra, you should have faith in me and in these other Buddhas, these other Blessed Ones.

Sukhāvatī-vyūhaḥ (*Saṃkṣipta-mātṛkā*), (also known as the Smaller *Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra),* trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Pure Lands

Passage M.158 describes the wondrous qualities of the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha, and passage M.114 describes a contemplation of Amitābha.

The qualities of Amitābha Buddha's Pure Land *M.159*

This passage gives some of the forty-six[636] *vows of Dharmākara, the* bodhisattva *who is seen to have become Amitābha Buddha, these vows detailing*

636 Forty-seven or forty-eight in other versions of the text.

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the benefits that he will ensure exist in his Pure Land: he vows that his very attainment of Buddhahood is dependent on this.

1. Blessed One,[637] may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if there should be any hells in my Buddha-field, if anyone should be born there as an animal, if there should be a realm of hungry ghosts there, or if anyone should be born there as a demi-god.

2. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if any of the living beings who are born in my Buddha-field should die, and be reborn in hell, as an animal, in the realm of hungry ghosts, or as a demi-god. ...

5. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if the living beings who are born in my Buddha-field should not all attain completely perfect mastery of supernormal abilities,[638] such that they are able to traverse countless hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddha-fields in a fraction of a second.

6. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if the living beings who are born in my Buddha-field should not all be able to remember their previous lives, countless hundreds of thousands of millions of eons into the past.

7. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if the living beings who are born in my Buddha-field should not all acquire the divine eye, such that they are able to see countless hundreds of thousands of millions of world-systems.

8. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if the living beings who are born in my Buddha-field should not all acquire the divine ear, such that they are able to hear the true Dharma in countless hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddha-fields simultaneously.

9. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if the living beings who are born in my Buddha-field should not all have the ability to know the thoughts of others, such that they are able to know the mental activity of living beings dwelling in countless hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddha-fields.

10. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if any of the living beings who are born in my Buddha-field should conceive any notion of ownership, even of their own bodies.

11. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if any of the living beings who are born in my Buddha-field should not be firmly established in perfection until they attain great, final nirvana. ...

15. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if, when I have attained awakening, there should be any limit to the measure of my lifespan, even such that it were limited to countless multitudes of hundreds of thousands of millions of eons.

16. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if, when I have attained awakening, any of the living beings in that Buddha-field should even hear the phrase "unwholesome". ...

18. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if,

637 Addressed to a past Buddha, whom Dharmākara made his vows before.

638 As at Th.141: meditation-based supernormal powers and knowledge often attained on the brink of awakening.

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when I have attained awakening, I should not appear at the moment of their death to any living being in another world-system who has set their mind on unsurpassed, perfect awakening, who has heard my name, and who recollects me with a mind of faith, appearing before them to calm their mind, surrounded and accompanied by a Sangha of monks. ...

19. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if living beings in innumerable, countless Buddha-fields who have heard my name, who are intent on that Buddha-field, and who dedicate the karmic benefit of their wholesome roots to being reborn there, are not reborn there – even those who have only cultivated this thought ten times.[639] This is with the exception of those who have committed the five acts which have immediate bad karmic consequences,[640] or whose opposition to the true Dharma obstructs them from being reborn there.[641]

20. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if, when I have attained awakening, those living beings who are reborn there should not be limited to only one more birth before attaining unsurpassed, perfect awakening. This is with the exception of those bodhisattvas, those great beings, who have taken the supreme vow, who clad themselves in mighty armour, who are awake to the needs of the whole world, who are devoted to the whole world, who are devoted to the attainment of nirvana by the whole world, who practise the path of the bodhisattva in all world-systems, who encounter all Buddhas, who establish as many living beings as there are grains of sand in the River Ganges in unsurpassed, perfect awakening, who are committed to the highest practice, and who have perfected the practice of universal benefit. ...

29. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if, when I have attained awakening, that Buddha-field should not be so clear that innumerable, uncountable, inconceivable, unequalled, immeasurable Buddha-fields are visible all around, as clear as a face in a highly polished mirror. ...

32. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if, when I have attained awakening, living beings in innumerable, uncountable, inconceivable, unequalled Buddha-fields should not be touched by my radiance, such that they are all filled with a happiness which surpasses that of gods and men. ...

37. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if,

639 According to Talban (476–542), the first patriarch of the Chinese Pure Land school, this means ten concentrated and uninterrupted thoughts of Amitābha and also means ten continuous recitations of his Name (by chanting *Namo'mitābhāya Buddhāya* (in Sanskrit), *Nan-mo A-mi-tuo Fo* (in Chinese), *Namo Amida Butsu* (in Japanese): Honour to Amitābha Buddha).

640 Intentionally killing one's mother, father or an *arhant*, shedding the blood of a Buddha, or causing a schism in the Sangha.

641 The numbering and organisation of Amitābha's vows is slightly different in the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the text. Thus, the famous vow known as Amitābha's Eighteenth Primal Vow in East Asian Buddhism is included along with the content of the twentieth vow of the Chinese text in this vow, numbered as the nineteenth in the Sanskrit text.

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when I have attained awakening, living beings should not enjoy the happiness of an arhant free from craving, the happiness of a monk dwelling in the third meditative absorption, the moment they are born in that Buddha-field. ...

44. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if, when I have attained awakening, the living beings born in that Buddha-field should not be able to hear any Dharma-teaching they wish, the moment they think of it.

45. Blessed One, may I not attain unsurpassed, perfect awakening if, when I have attained awakening, the progress towards unsurpassed, perfect awakening of bodhisattvas in that Buddha-field, or in any other Buddha-field, should not become irreversible when they hear my name.

Sukhāvatī-vyūhaḥ (*Vistara-mātṛkā*) (also known as the Larger *Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra*), trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA

Happiness in this and future lives

V.77 The effects of wholesome actions

This passage follows the one on the nature of the ten wholesome actions (V.41), and describes their karmic effects as experiences that accord with their causes in terms of being similar to them.

The (karmically) ripened effect of practising the ten wholesome actions is that you will be reborn in one of the three higher realms (of humans, demi-gods, and gods). The activity that accords with its cause is that you will take delight in wholesome actions in every lifetime, so they will further multiply. The experiences that accord with their causes, the ten wholesome actions, are as follows: By abstaining from killing, you will have a long and healthy life. Through abstaining from taking what is not given, you will be wealthy and immune from robbers. Through abstaining from sensual misconduct, you will have a charming spouse and few rivals. Through abstaining from lying, you will be praised and loved by everyone. Through abstaining from divisive speech, you will be respected by people around you. Through abstaining from harsh language, you will be pleasant to hear. Through abstaining from idle chatter, your words will be creditable. Through abstaining from covetousness, your wishes will be fulfilled. Through abstaining from malevolence, you will be free from harm. Finally, through abstaining from wrong views, you will come to understand the right view.

'The Words of My Perfect Teacher', p.187, trans. T.A.

Definitive spiritual breakthroughs

V.78 Milarepa's Song of Realization

In this passage Milarepa sings about the final realization he gained while staying in mountain retreat. He sings about the confidence of a fully awakened buddha who has gone beyond all dualities - including the temporal distinc-

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tion of past and future and the existential distinction of saṃsāra *and nirvana. It even includes the moral distinction of right and wrong: once you realise the non-dual state of a Buddha, the benefit of beings is spontaneously accomplished and there is no need to make these conventional conceptual distinctions any more.*

Having meditated in a different mountain area, I have discovered an unborn confidence; resolved dualistic perception of past and future lives, revealed the appearances of the six realms as deceptions, and cut the imputations of birth and death.

Having obtained the confidence of equality, I've resolved the duality of pleasure and pain, revealed the experience of sensations as deceptions, and cut the imputations of right and wrong.

Having attained an inalienable confidence, I've resolved the duality of saṃsāra and nirvana, revealed the stages of gradual practice as deceptions, and cut the imputations of hope and fear.

'One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa', p.58. trans. T.A.

Nirvana

The nature of liberation is the nature of nirvana *V.79*

Continued from the text on the middle way as freedom from the two extremes of existence and non-existence (V.32), this passage describes the nature of nirvana in a similar way.

But if phenomena of saṃsāra are neither existent nor non-existent, then is nirvana something existent or something non-existent? Some theoreticians speculate that nirvana must be something existent. However, it is not. As (Nāgārjuna) said in the 'Precious Garland', 'If nirvana is not something non-existent, then how could it be something existent'? (RV I.42a). If it were something existent (*bhāva*), then nirvana would be a conditioned thing (*saṃskṛta*); and if it were conditioned, then eventually it would come to an end. As said in The 'Fundamental Treatise of the Middle Way' (of Nāgārjuna): 'If nirvana was something existent, then it would be conditioned', (MMK XXV.5) and so forth. Neither can it be something non-existent. As he says in the same place, 'It is not non-existent' (MMK XXV.7).

So one may ask what nirvana actually is. What we call nirvana is ineffable beyond the reasoning mind, with all concepts of existence and non-existence exhausted. As the 'Precious Garland' says: 'What we call nirvana is the exhaustion of all concepts of existence and non-existence' (RV I.42b). 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening' also says that, 'When neither existence nor non-existence is left for the mind, then there being no other option, it calms down without a thought' (BCA IX.26). The 'Noble Sūtra Requested by Brahmā' says: 'It is the calming down of conceptual thoughts,[642]

freedom from agitation.' The 'White Lotus of Sublime Dharma Sūtra' says: 'Kāśyapa, nirvana is the realization of the sameness of all phenomena (in emptiness).'

642 Equivalent to the 'unproliferated' of Th.182.

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Thus, nirvana is nothing but the mere calming down of the reasoning mind – rather than anything that is produced or stopped, abandoned or attained. Thus, the 'Fundamental Treatise of the Middle Way' says: 'Nothing abandoned, nothing attained, nothing annihilated, and nothing permanent; that is nirvana' (MMK XXV.3). Since nirvana is neither produced nor stopped, neither abandoned nor attained, it is not something one should create, construct, or transform into. The 'Precious Sky (Ratna-ākāśa) Sūtra' also asserts that, 'There is nothing to be removed, not the slightest thing to be established; just look at authentic reality as it really is, and if you can see it that way, you are completely free.'

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.287–89, trans. T.A.

Activities of the Buddha

V.80 Spontaneous manifestation

The last chapter of 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation' describes the spontaneous activities of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind. It utilizes a number of evocative similes from the Uttaratantra *(UT) to describe how the Buddha manifests all those acts spontaneously from the non-conceptual state of mind, in response to the various needs of sentient beings.*

Arousing the awakening-mind first, then practising the path and finally attaining Buddhahood as a result, are all just for the purpose of dispelling sentient beings' suffering and making them happy. When you become a Buddha, you dwell without any conceptual thought or deliberate effort, but while the Buddha does not have any thought or intention to benefit sentient beings, their welfare is spontaneously, incessantly accomplished.

How does that happen? In brief, the Buddha-body acts for beings' sakes without conceptuality;[643] Buddha-speech and Buddha-mind likewise serve their benefits without any concept. Those three comprise the activity of a Buddha. The way Buddha-body, speech and mind work for the sakes of sentient beings without any concepts is illustrated by a number of similes in the 'Unsurpassed Continuum' (*Uttaratantra*): 'Like Indra, a drum, clouds, and Brahmā; like the Sun, and a precious (wish-fulfilling) gem; the Tathāgata is like an echo, like the sky, and the earth' (UT XVII.13).

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.348–49, trans. T.A.

V.81 Activities of the Buddha-body

'Appearing as Indra' is a simile for how the Buddha-body works for the sakes of sentient beings, without any conceptual thought. Indra, chief of the gods, and his divine maidens live in a magnificent mansion, which is made of pure and translucent beryl crystal, and so a reflection of Indra appears outside the palace. Some men and women living on the Earth can perceive the reflection of Indra and his enjoyments. Wishing they would soon reach that state, they make aspirations and

643 I.e. it arises naturally, with no need at all to think about it.

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undertake wholesome actions for that purpose, so they are reborn there after they die. Although the reflected image (of Indra) has not any conceptual thought or disturbance, it still inspires faith and a higher aspiration in those who perceive it.

Likewise, those who perceive all the various miraculous displays – such as walking, standing, sitting, lying down, teaching the Dharma, or meditating – of the body of the Buddhas, adorned with the major and minor marks (of a great being), are inspired to faith and aspiration by those appearances. They arouse the awakening-mind and start practising the path in order to attain that state, and so they finally reach Buddhahood – notwithstanding that the physical appearance of the Buddha has no conceptual thought or disturbance.

As said, 'Just as Indra's body is reflected on the clear crystal ground (of his palace), the body of the Buddha is reflected on the pure ground of beings' minds' (UT XVII.29). That is how the Buddha-body acts for beings' sakes without conceptuality.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.349–50, trans. T.A.

Activities of Buddha-speech *V.82*

'Like a divine drum' is a simile for how Buddha-speech works for the sakes of sentient beings without any conceptual thought. On top of Indra's magnificent mansion, there is a divine drum 'Holding the Power of the Dharma', accomplished by the strength of the positive actions performed by the gods in the past. While not having any conceptual thought, it constantly warns the heedless gods by resounding with the four axioms of the (Buddhist) view: 'All conditioned things are impermanent. All phenomena lack self-identity. Everything tainted is painful. Nirvana is complete peace.' As it is said, 'Just as the Dharma Drum reminds forgetful gods of impermanence, painfulness, lack of identity, and peace, through the force of the gods' previous beneficial karma without any effort, without stop, without any mental form or conceptuality' (UT XVII.31-32).

Likewise, the speech of the Buddha, though free of deliberate effort and analytical conceptuality, teaches the Dharma to fortunate sentient beings in whatever way it is appropriate. As it is said, 'Likewise, even though the All-pervading (Buddha) is free from effort, and so forth, Buddha-speech pervades all beings without exception, teaching the Dharma to those fortunate ones' (UT XVII.33). This is the way Buddha-speech works for sentient beings without conceptual thought.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.350–51, trans. T.A.

Activities of Buddha-mind *V.83*

'Like a cloud' is a simile for how Buddha-mind works for the sakes of sentient beings without any conceptual thought. It is like clouds gathering without any deliberate effort in the summer sky and pouring down rain on the earth; without any conceptual thought they make the various crops perfectly grow. As is said, 'Just as clouds in the summer, raining down a mass of water on the earth without any effort make the harvests grow' (UT XVII.42).

Similarly, the activity of Buddha-mind is pouring down the rain of Dharma without any conceptual thought, ripening the harvest of

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wholesome actions. As it is said, 'Likewise, from the compassionate activity of the Buddha, there pours down the rainwater of the sublime Buddha-Dharma without any conceptual thought for the sakes of beings, ripening their harvests' (UT XVII.43). That is how Buddha-mind works for the benefit of sentient beings without conceptual thought.

'Like Brahmā': Brahmā, king of the gods, can show up in all divine worlds while not shifting from the Brahmā world. Similarly, the Buddha works through performing the twelve deeds[644] for those who are to become his disciples while not moving from the Dharma-body. As it is said, 'Just as Brahmā, king of the gods, appears effortlessly in all divine worlds while not shifting from the Brahmā-world; likewise, the Buddha effortlessly displays emanations for fortunate ones throughout the three realms while not moving from the Dharma-body' (UT XVII.54).

'Like the sun': The rays of the sun can cause various lotuses and innumerable other kinds of flowers to simultaneously open their petals without any conceptual thought. Likewise, the light-rays of the Buddha-Dharma, while not having any thoughts or intentions, can open the mind-lotuses of disciples of incalculable types and interests. As is said, 'Like the sun shining its light all at once without any conceptual thought makes the lotuses open their petals and ripens different types of flowers; likewise, the light-rays of the sublime Dharma from the sun of the Tathāgata shine on the lotuses of disciples without any conceptual thought' (UT XVII.58-9).

Another way to take this simile is that just as the sun is reflected at the same time in every pure water-vessel, the Buddha also appears simultaneously to all disciples who have pure vision. As is said, 'The sun of the Tathāgata is reflected in innumerable ways simultaneously in the water-vessel of each pure disciple' (UT XVII.62).

The wish-fulfilling jewel: Even though the wish-fulfilling precious gem has no conceptual thoughts, it effortlessly produces whatever is needed and asked for. In a similar way, relying on the Buddha, all the different kinds of disciples can attain their intended purposes. As is said, 'Just like a wish-fulfilling gem, though having no concepts, can simultaneously fulfil the different wishes of all those living within its sphere of activity; likewise, though people with different intentions will hear various versions of the Dharma when listening to the wish-fulfilling Buddha, he does not have any concepts' (UT XVII.67-8).

The echo, the earth, and the sky are also similes for how the Buddha works for beings' sakes without any conceptual thought.

'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation', pp.351–54, trans. T.A.

644 A Buddha's 'twelve deeds' are: 1) descent from the Tuṣita heaven, 2) conception, 3) birth, 4) becoming skilled in various arts, 5) delighting in the company of royal consorts, 6) renunciation, 7) practising austerities for six years, 8) going to the Bodhi-tree, 9) overcoming Māra and his host of defilements, 10) attaining awakening, 11) giving his first Dharma teaching, 12) final nirvana at death.

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PART III

THE SANGHA OR SPIRITUAL 'COMMUNITY'



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On the previous page:
A ceremony in which new robes are presented to a monk.

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CHAPTER 11

MONASTIC AND LAY DISCIPLES AND NOBLE PERSONS

THERAVĀDA

The Buddha's community of monastic and lay disciples

Th.189 The four kinds of disciples

In this passage, the Buddha, in his eightieth year, is reminded of something he had said long ago about how he would not pass away until his four kinds of disciples were well trained and able to pass on the Dhamma he had taught, based on their own realisation and practice. He goes on to say that he now has such disciples.

I will not attain final nirvana (at death) till I have monk disciples ... nun disciples ... laymen disciples ... and laywomen disciples who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, versed in Dhamma, practising Dhamma in accordance with Dhamma, practising the proper way, conducting themselves according to Dhamma, who will pass on what they have gained from their own teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyse it, make it clear, till they shall be able by means of Dhamma to refute false teachings that have arisen, and teach the Dhamma of wondrous effect.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.104–105, trans. P.H.

Th.190 Laypeople and monastics support one another on the path

This passage sees the mutual giving of laypeople and monastics as the basis for progress on the path to nirvana. Laypeople supply monks and nuns with material support, and the monastics teach Dhamma, the best of gifts, to laypeople. Monastics rely on material support freely given by the laity, as they are not allowed paid employment or to farm.

Monks, brahmins and householders are very helpful to you, as they provide you with the requisites of robes, alms food, bed and lodgings and medical requisites for support during sickness. You, too, monks, are very helpful to brahmins and householders, as you teach them the Dhamma that is lovely in the beginning, lovely in the middle, lovely in its culmination; as you expound the holy life, both in meaning and letter, that is whole and complete, that is pure. In this way the holy life is lived in mutual dependence, for the purpose of crossing over the flood (of life's pains), for rightly making an end of suffering.

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Householders and the homeless (renunciants) in mutual dependence, both reach the true Dhamma: the unsurpassed safety from bondage.

Bahūpakārā Sutta: Itivuttaka 111, trans. P.H.

The monastic Sangha

Th.191 Guiding principles for the monastic Sangha

Then, soon after Vassakara's departure, the Blessed One addressed Venerable Ānanda thus: 'Ānanda, go now and assemble in the hall of audience as many monks as live around Rājagaha.' 'Very well, venerable sir.' Venerable Ānanda did as he was requested and informed the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, the community of monks is assembled. Now let the Blessed One do as he wishes.'

Thereupon the Blessed One rose from his seat, went up to the hall of audience, took his appointed seat there, and addressed the monks thus: 'Monks, I shall set for seven conditions leading to welfare. Listen and pay heed to what I shall say.' 'Yes, venerable sir.' 'Monks, the growth of the monk's Sangha is to be expected, not their decline, so long as they assemble frequently and in large numbers ... so long as they meet and disperse peacefully and attend to the affairs of the community in concord. ... so long as they appoint no new rules, and do not abolish the existing ones, but proceed in accordance with the code of discipline laid down. ... so long as they show respect, honour, esteem, and veneration towards the elder monks, those of long standing, long gone forth, the fathers and leaders of the community, and think it worthwhile to listen to them. ... so long as they do not come under the power of the craving that leads to renewed existence. ... so long as they cherish the forest depths for their dwellings. ... so long as they establish themselves in mindfulness, so that well behaved companions in the holy life who have not come yet might do so, and those already come might live in peace.

Monks, so long as these seven conditions leading to welfare endure among the community of monks and the community of monks are known for it, their growth is to be expected, not their decline.

Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya II.76–77, trans. G.A.S.

Th.192 Monastic harmony comes from kindness, sharing, and working together in following moral precepts and developing insight

In this passage, the Buddha addresses the monks of Kosambi who he had been told were quarrelling with each other in a harsh and uncompromising way.

The Blessed One said: 'Monks, at a time when you have started a quarrel, a dispute, engaged in contentions, and living piercing each other with sharp dagger-like words, are you established towards co-associates in the holy life outwardly and inwardly in bodily, verbal and mental actions of loving kindness?' 'No, venerable sir.' 'Foolish men, knowing and seeing what benefit, are you living like this? This will be for your harm and suffering for a long time.'

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: 'Monks, there are these six qualities which conduce to harmony, friendliness, reverence, po-

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liteness, non-contentiousness, unity, and togetherness. What six? Here, monks, loving kindness in bodily action is established in a monk towards co-associates in the holy life outwardly and inwardly, loving kindness in verbal action ... loving kindness in mental action ... Again monks, gains that are right and righteously obtained, even as much as the contents of a begging bowl, the monk would not partake of without sharing equally with the virtuous co-associates in the holy life. Again, in respect of those good precepts, not broken, not flawed, spotless, unblemished, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, conducive to meditative concentration, a monk lives having become equal in them with the co-associates in the holy life outwardly and inwardly. Again in respect of the view that is noble, tending towards liberation, leading the person who acts accordingly to the proper destruction of suffering, a monk becomes equal with the co-associates in the holy life outwardly and inwardly in holding such a view.

Kosambiya Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.321–323, trans. P.D.P.

Monastic discipline

*Amongst the rules followed by monks, the most important are ones which, if broken, entail 'defeat' in the monastic life (see V.84): automatically ceasing to be a monk, and permanent dismissal. They are broken, respectively, by: any form of sexual intercourse; theft of anything of sufficient value to normally entail legal prosecution; intentional killing of a human, including aiding or encouraging suicide; lying about having attained an advanced spiritual state (*Vinaya *I.23, 46, 73, 91). The last of these is a serious offence as doing it could be a way to attract more donations and gain undeserved respect and influence. Celibacy is a central aspect of monastic training, as sexual desire is seen as a strong form of craving, sexual thoughts and activity waste energy that can be better used in spiritual practice, and children and family would also be a diversion from this (see L.8). There are over 200 other monastic rules, covering many matters of moral behaviour and spiritual training to reduce attachment and prompt mindfulness. On these and the situation as regards nuns, see SI.2 and heading before Th.220.*

Moral instruction to monks and nuns *Th.193*

This passage counsels a simple, non-attached life for monks and nuns.

Monks, listen, I will tell you the scrupulous moral teaching, the way of conduct that is fitting for one who has renounced. The wise one who has vision into wellbeing should practise it.

The monk should not wander for alms at untimely hours. He should wander for alms in the village at the proper time. Attachment sticks to one who wanders at untimely hours. Therefore, the awakened ones do not wander at the wrong time.

Forms, sounds, tastes, smells and (bodily) contacts intoxicate living beings. Abandoning the desire for these things, he should set out for breakfast.

The monk, having obtained alms-food at the proper time, should return alone and sit in seclusion. With a composed self, he should direct his thoughts within and not let the mind get distracted outwards.

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If engaged in conversation with a disciple or even with another monk, he should bring out the excellent teaching, but not engage in divisive talk or making accusations against others.

Some show opposition to an argument. These persons with little wisdom, I do not praise. Attachment sticks to them through this or that, and in that context they make their minds go (wandering) far.

The monk, the disciple of the noble and wise one, having heard the teaching taught by the Fortunate One should discriminately use alms-food, dwellings, beds, and seats, and water that removes the dust of the outer robe.

Therefore, the monk is not tainted, just as the lotus leaf (is untainted) by drops of water, by these things such as alms-food, beds and seats and water that removes the dust of the outer robes.

Dhammika Sutta: *Sutta-nipāta* 376 and 385–392, trans. P.D.P.

Th.194 How a monk should relate to food

The first passage, on avoiding an evening meal, is expressed in the monastic code as not eating after noon (*Vinaya* IV.85–86). *The second passage is on the right manner of gathering alms-food and the attitude to it.*

On one occasion the Blessed One was wandering in the Kāsi country together with a large Sangha of monks. There he addressed the monks thus: 'I abstain from eating an evening meal. By so doing, I enjoy health, strength and comfortable abiding. Come, monks, abstain from eating an evening meal. By doing so, you too will be free from illness and affliction, and you will enjoy health, strength, and a comfortable abiding.'

Kiṭāgiri Sutta: *Majjhima-nikāya* I.473 trans. G.A.S.

As a bee gathers nectar from a flower and leaves without damaging its colour or fragrance, so should a sage wander (for alms) in a village.

A monk who does not despise what he has received, even though it be little, who is pure in livelihood and unremitting in effort – him even the gods praise.

Dhammapada 49 and 366, trans. P.H.

Th.195 Unenlightened disciples still have work to do with diligence

Monks, I do not say of all monks that they still have some practice to do with diligence; nor do I say of all monks that they have no more practice to do with diligence.

Monks, I do not say of those monks who are arahants with intoxicating inclinations destroyed ... Why is that? They have done their practice with diligence; they are no more capable of being negligent.

Monks, I say so of those monks who are trainees, whose minds have not yet reached the goal, and who are still aspiring to the unsurpassed security from bondage, that they still have some practice to do with diligence. Why is that? Because when those venerable ones make use of suitable lodging and associate with spiritual friends and nurture their spiritual faculties, they may, by realizing it for themselves with direct insight, in this present life enter upon and dwell in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth

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from the home-life into homelessness. Seeing this fruit of diligence for these monks, I say that they still have some practice to do with diligence.

Kīṭāgiri Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.477–479, trans. G.A.S.

The duty of meditative training *Th.196*

In this passage, the Buddha speaks in praise of a new monk who meditates and attains awakening though other monks criticize him for not participating in everyday monastic duties.

Now on that occasion a certain newly ordained monk, after returning from the alms round, would enter his dwelling after the meal and pass the time living at ease and keeping silent. He did not render service to the monks at the time of making robes. Then a number of monks approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and reported this matter to him.

Then the Blessed One addressed a certain monk thus, 'Come, monk, tell that monk in my name that the teacher calls him.' 'Yes, venerable sir', that monk replied to the Blessed One and went to the monk and told him, 'Friend, the teacher calls you.' 'Yes, friend', that monk replied and approached the Blessed One, paid respect to him, and sat down to one side.

The Blessed One then said to him: 'Monk, is it true that after returning from the alms round you enter your dwelling after meal and pass the time living at ease and keeping silent, and you do not render service to the monks at the time of making robes?' 'Venerable sir, I am doing my duty.'

Then the Blessed One, having known with his own mind the reflection in that monk's mind, addressed the monks thus: 'Monks, do not find fault with this monk. This monk is one who gains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four stages of absorption that constitute the higher mind and provide a pleasant dwelling in this very life. And he is one who, by realizing it for himself with direct insight, in this very life enters and dwells in that unsurpassed goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.

Nava Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.277–278, trans. G.A.S.

Wandering rightly in the world *Th.197*

A monk should wander without grasping at anything or anyone, being like a lotus leaf which water does not stick to, but rolls off (see Th.193).

'For whom the omens, meteors, dreams and signs are rooted out', said the Blessed One, 'whose stains of omens were completely forsaken, that monk would wander rightly in the world.

A monk should cut his attachment to the pleasures of the senses, both human and divine. Having gone beyond (any) way of being (identity), having understood the Dhamma, he would wander rightly in the world.

Having put slander behind, a monk should abandon anger and unkindness. With compliance, having discarded opposition completely, he would wander rightly in the world.

Having abandoned the pleasant and the unpleasant, not grasping,

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not dependent on anything, completely released from the fetters, he would wander rightly in the world.

He does not come across any essence in acquisitions. Having cut his attachment and desire for what is taken, being independent, not to be led by others, he would wander rightly in the world.

Unopposed in word, thought, and deed, rightly knowing the Dhamma, desiring nirvana, he would wander rightly in the world.

If any monk were not haughty, (thinking) 'He salutes me', and even when abused were not to ruminate on it, and having received food from another were not to be elated, he would wander rightly in the world.

He has abandoned greed and a way of being, abstaining from cutting and binding others, he has crossed over doubt, and is without the barb. That monk would wander rightly in the world.

Knowing what is appropriate for himself, a monk should not harm anyone in this world. Knowing the Dhamma as it really is, he would wander rightly in the world.'

Sammā-paribbājaniya Sutta: Sutta-nipāta 359–375, trans. G.A.S.

Th.198 Recycling old robes

Here Ānanda explains that, though there may be many gifts to the monastic Sangha, they are made very good use of, in a non-wasteful way.

Then King Udena's concubines approached Venerable Ānanda. Having approached, having greeted Venerable Ānanda, they sat down at a respectful distance. Venerable Ānanda gladdened, rejoiced, roused, delighted King Udena's concubines with a talk on Dhamma as they were sitting down at a respectful distance.

Then King Udena's concubines, gladdened, rejoiced, roused, delighted by Venerable Ānanda with a Dhamma talk presented five hundred inner robes to Venerable Ānanda. Then King Udena's concubines, pleased with Venerable Ānanda's words, having thanked Venerable Ānanda, rising from their seats, having greeted Venerable Ānanda, having kept their right sides towards him, went to King Udena.

King Udena saw the concubines coming in the distance. Seeing them he spoke thus to the concubines, 'Did you see the renunciant Ānanda?' 'Yes, sir, we did see master Ānanda.' 'Did not you give anything to the renunciant Ānanda?' 'Sir, we gave five hundred inner robes to master Ānanda.'

King Udena looked down upon, criticised, spread it about, saying: 'How can this renunciant Ānanda accept so many robes? Will the renunciant Ānanda set up trade in woven cloth or will he offer them for sale in a shop?' Then King Udena approached Venerable Ānanda. Having approached, he exchanged greetings with Venerable Ānanda. Having exchanged greetings of friendliness and courtesy, he sat down at a respectful distance. As he was sitting down at a respectful distance, King Udena spoke thus to Venerable Ānanda, 'Did not our concubines come here, Venerable Ānanda?' 'Your majesty, your concubines did come here.' 'Did they not give anything to Venerable Ānanda?' 'Your majesty, they gave me five hundred inner robes.' 'Venerable Ānanda, w'Your majesty, I will share them with those monks whose robes are worn thin.' 'Venerable Ānanda, what will you do with those old robes

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that are worn thin?' 'Your majesty, we will make them into upper coverings.' 'Venerable Ānanda, what will you do with those upper coverings that are old?' 'Your majesty, we will make them into mattress coverings.' 'Venerable Ānanda, what will you do with those mattress coverings that are old?' 'Your majesty, we will make them into ground coverings.' 'Venerable Ānanda, what will you do with those ground coverings that are old?' 'Your majesty, we will make them into foot-wipers.' 'Venerable Ānanda, what will you do with those foot-wipers that are old?' 'Your majesty, we will make them into dusters. 'Venerable Ānanda, what will you do with those dusters that are old?' 'Your majesty, having torn them into shreds, having kneaded them with mud, we will smear a plaster-flooring.'

Then King Udena, thinking, 'These renunciants, the Sakyans, use everything in an orderly way and do not let things go to waste, offered even another five hundred woven cloths to Venerable Ānanda.

Cullavagga XI. 13–14: *Vinaya* II.290–292, trans. G.A.S.

Types of noble disciples

Those who have been deeply spiritually transformed by practising the noble eightfold path are known as 'noble ones' (ariya). *The highest kind of noble one, other than a perfectly awakened Buddha or a solitary-buddha, is (1) the* arahant, *who has ended all defilements, and is beyond any further rebirth. The three other main kinds of noble ones are: (2)) non-returners, who will not return to the 'sensual desire' realm of humans and lower gods, but will mostly be reborn in one or all five of the 'pure abodes' (Th1.6) within the* brahmā *heavens, and there become* arahants; *(3) once-returners, who will only have one more rebirth as a human or in the lower heavens; and (4) 'stream-enterers', who will definitely attain arahantship within seven lives at most* (Aṅguttara-nikāya *I.233*), *and will not be reborn at less than a human level. There are also those who are intently practising at a level that will lead in this life to becoming a stream-enterer, or a once-returner, or a non-returner, or an* arahant.

The Sangha of noble persons *Th.199*

This is part of a passage on the Three Refuges that is frequently chanted in Pāli in devotional settings, as well as being reflected on in devotional meditations (see Th.134). It is on the qualities of the Noble Sangha of disciples. The term translated as 'disciple' is sāvaka, *literally 'hearer', i.e. a true hearer who has heard and been transformed by the Dhamma, so as to be fully or partially awakened. These are the 'four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals': persons at the four stages of permanent spiritual transformation – stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners and* arahants *– and also those serious practitioners definitively established on the paths to each of these. These might be monastics or serious laypersons, and can even include some gods. They are all the 'unsurpassed field of karmic benefit for the world' as gifts given to them bring greatly positive karmic fruits.*

Here, monks, a disciple who is a noble one is endowed with confirmed confidence in the Sangha thus: 'The Sangha (Community) of the Blessed One's disciples is practising the good way, practising the straight way, practising the true way, practising the proper way; that

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is to say, the four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals: the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field of karmic benefit for the world.'

Rājā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.343, trans. P.H.

Th.200 The ten fetters overcome by noble disciples

The four main kinds of noble ones progressively overcome what are known as the ten fetters. The 'lower' fetters bind a person to the rebirths in the realm of sensual desire, in a hell or as a hungry ghost, animal, human, or in one of the lower heavens; the 'higher' ones bind a person to the more refined heavenly rebirths of the elemental form and the formless levels. 'View on personality' is regarding the body, feeling, perception, volitional activities or consciousness as Self, a possession of Self, within Self or containing Self. Deeper than this is 'conceit': self-centredness based on the vague sense of 'I am' (Saṃyutta-nikāya *III.130–131).*

Monks, there are these five lower fetters. What five? View on personality, vacillation, clinging to rules and vows, sensual desire, and ill-will ...

Monks, there are these five higher fetters. What five? Attachment to form, attachment to the formless, conceit, restlessness and ignorance.

Oram-bhāgiya and *Uddham-bhāgiya Suttas*: *Saṃyutta-nikāya* V.61, trans. P.H.

Th.201 The four main kinds of noble disciples

This passage differentiates the main kinds of noble ones in terms of fetters or intoxicating inclinations (āsava) *eradicated. The* arahant *is defined as one who has ended all the intoxicating inclinations (explained at Th.128) as well as* all *the above fetters.*

A monk, from the elimination of (the first) three fetters, is a stream-enterer, no longer bound to the nether world,[645] fixed in destiny, with awakening as his destination. Again, a monk, from the elimination of three fetters and the reduction of attachment, hatred and delusion,[646] is a once-returner; coming to this world once (more), he makes an end of the painful. Again, a monk, from the elimination of the five lower fetters will be of spontaneous rebirth; he is one who attains nirvana without returning from that world. Again, a monk, from the destruction of the intoxicating inclinations, reaches in this very life the liberation of mind without intoxicating inclinations and liberation by wisdom which he has realised by his own higher knowledge, and having attained (this), dwells (in it).

Mahāli Sutta: Dīgha-nikāya I.156, trans. P.H.

Th.202 The factors of stream-entry

This passage describes what are elsewhere called the 'four factors of stream-entry' (e.g. Saṃyutta-nikāya *V.407–08).*

Monks, a Wheel-turning monarch, having exercised supreme sovereign rulership over the four continents, with the dissolution of the

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645 Sub-human rebirths: as an animal, ghost, or hell being.
646 So as to reduce the fourth and fifth fetters.

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body, after death is reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world ... still, as he does not possess four things, he is not freed from hell, the animal realm, the domain of ghosts ... Although, monks, a noble disciple maintains himself by lumps of alms-food and wears rag robes, still, as he possesses four things, he is freed from hell, the animal realm, the domain of ghosts ...

What are the four? Here, monks, the noble disciple is endowed with firm confidence in the Buddha ... confirmed confidence in the Dhamma ... confirmed confidence in the Sangha. He is endowed with the virtues dear to the noble ones – unbroken,[647] untorn, unblemished, unmottled, freeing, praised by the wise, unclung to, leading to meditative concentration. ...

And, monks, between the obtaining of sovereignty over the four continents and obtaining these four things, the obtaining of sovereignty over the four continents is not worth a sixteenth part of obtaining these four things.

Rāja Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya V.342–343, trans. P.H.

No mental pain in response to being in physical pain *Th.203*

This passage describes the non-returner, who is free from sensual desire and aversion, and the arahant.

The instructed noble disciple, being contacted by painful feeling, does not sorrow, grieve or lament; he does not weep, beating his breast and become distraught. He feels one feeling: a bodily one, not a mental one. Suppose they were to strike a man with a dart, but they would not strike him immediately afterwards with a second dart, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by one dart only. So too ...

Sallattena Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.209, trans. P.H.

The accomplished community *Th.204*

In this passage, the Buddha affirms that he has far more than 500 in each of these categories: arahant *monks,* arahant *nuns, non-returner celibate laymen disciples, stream-enterer non-celibate laymen disciples, non-returner celibate laywomen disciples, and stream-enterer non-celibate laywomen disciples.*

'Vaccha, when a monk has abandoned craving, cut it off at the root, made it like a palm stump, done away with it so that it is no longer subject to future arising, that monk is an arahant with intoxicating inclinations destroyed, one who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the ultimate goal, utterly destroyed the fetter (of attachment to) ways of being,[648] liberated with right gnosis.'

'Venerable Gotama, apart from Venerable Gotama, is there any monk, Venerable Gotama's disciple, who by realizing it for himself with direct (supernormal) knowledge, in this present life enters upon and dwells in the freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom, which, with the

647 It is made clear at *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.231–32 that a stream-enterer may still have a minor lapse from ethical discipline, but immediately recognises this, acknowledges it to someone else, and seeks to avoid it in future.

648 See Th.128 and164.

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destruction of the intoxicating inclinations, is without intoxicating inclinations?' 'Vaccha, there are not only one hundred, or two or three or four or five hundred, but far more monks, my disciples, of such a kind.'

'Venerable Gotama, apart from Venerable Gotama and the monks, is there any nun of such a kind?' 'Vaccha, there are not only one hundred, or two or three or four or five hundred, but far more nuns, my disciples, of such a kind.'

'Venerable Gotama, apart from Venerable Gotama and the monks and nuns, is there any male lay follower, Venerable Gotama's disciple, clothed in white leading a life of celibacy who, with the destruction of the five lower fetters, will be reborn spontaneously (in the 'pure abodes' where only non-returners dwell) and there attain final nirvana without ever returning from that world?' 'Vaccha, there are not only one hundred, or two or three or four or five hundred, but far more male lay followers, my disciples, of such a kind.'

'Venerable Gotama, apart from Venerable Gotama, the monks and nuns, and the male lay followers clothed in white leading celibacy, is there any male lay follower, Venerable Gotama's disciple, clothed in white enjoying sensual pleasures, who carries out his instruction, responds to his advice, has gone beyond (the fetter of) vacillation (so as to be a stream-enterer), become free from perplexity, gained intrepidity, and become independent of others in the teacher's dispensation?' 'Vaccha, there are not only one hundred or two or three or four or five hundred, but far more male lay followers, my disciples, of such a kind.'

'Venerable Gotama, apart from Venerable Gotama, the monks and nuns, and the male lay followers clothed in white, both those leading lives of celibacy and those enjoying sensual pleasures, is there any female lay follower, Venerable Gotama's disciple, clothed in white leading a life of celibacy who, with the destruction of the five lower fetters, will be reborn spontaneously and there attain final nirvana without ever returning from that world?' 'Vaccha, there are not only one hundred or two or three or four or five hundred, but far more female lay followers, my disciples, of such a kind.'

'Venerable Gotama, apart from Venerable Gotama, monks and nuns, and the male lay followers clothed in white, both those leading lives of celibacy and those enjoying sensual pleasures, and the female lay followers clothed in white leading lives of celibacy, is there any one female lay follower, Venerable Gotama's disciple, clothed in white enjoying sensual pleasures, who carries out his instruction, responds to his advice, has gone beyond vacillation, become free from perplexity, gained intrepidity, and become independent of others in the teacher's dispensation?' 'Vaccha, there are not only one hundred or two or three or four or five hundred, but far more female lay followers, my disciples, of such a kind' ...

Venerable Gotama, if only Venerable Gotama were accomplished in this Dhamma, but no monks ... nuns ... male lay followers ... female lay followers..., then this holy life would be deficient in that respect; but because Venerable Gotama, monks and nuns, male lay followers clothed in white, both those leading lives of celibacy and those enjoy-

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ing sensual pleasures, and female lay followers clothed in white, both those leading lives of celibacy and those enjoying sensual pleasures, are accomplished in this Dhamma, this holy life is thus complete in that respect.

Venerable Gotama, just as the river Ganges inclines toward the sea, slopes toward the sea, flows toward the sea, and reaches the sea, so too Venerable Gotama's assembly with its homeless ones and its householders inclines toward nirvana slopes toward nirvana, flows toward nirvana, and reaches toward nirvana.

Mahā-vacchagotta Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.490–493, trans. G.A.S.

Arahants

The nature of arahants *and their difference from a Buddha have been discussed to some extent in passages Th.7–8 and section introduction before these. Like the Buddha, though, they are 'profound, immeasurable, hard to fathom as is the great ocean' (Th.10).*

The Buddha's first five disciples become *arahants* *Th.205*

This passage follows on from the Buddha's first discourse: L.27.

And Venerable Koṇḍañña who had seen Dhamma, attained Dhamma, understood Dhamma, plunged into Dhamma, overcome vacillation, dispelled all doubts, attained full confidence in the teacher's instruction by himself, without dependence on anybody else, spoke to the Blessed One, 'Venerable sir, may I receive the going forth and higher ordination in the presence of the Blessed One?' 'Come, monk, said the Blessed One, well-taught is the Dhamma; lead a holy life for the sake of complete ending of the painful. Just this was Venerable one's receiving of the higher ordination. [649]

Then the Blessed One exhorted and instructed the other monks with Dhamma-talk. And while they were being exhorted and instructed by the Blessed One with Dhamma-talk, Venerable Vappa and Venerable Bhaddiya obtained the dust-free, stainless vision of Dhamma: 'whatever is subject to origination, all that is subject to cessation.'[650]

Then they who had seen Dhamma, attained Dhamma, understood Dhamma, plunged into Dhamma, overcome vacillation, dispelled all doubts, attained full confidence in the teacher's instruction by himself, without dependence on anybody else, spoke to the Blessed One, 'Venerable sir, may we receive the going forth and higher ordination in the presence of the Blessed One?' 'Come, monks, said the Blessed One, well-taught is the Dhamma; lead a holy life for the sake of complete ending of the painful. Just this was the venerable one's receiving of the higher ordination.

649 Conferring both 'going forth', otherwise used to ordain novices, and 'higher ordination', or 'admission' as a full monk, by way of saying '*ehi-bhikkhu*' ('Come, monk') was the earliest method of admitting individuals to the monastic order by the Buddha himself. Later, a formal ordination procedure was developed by him.

650 That is, he became at least a stream-enterer.

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And the Blessed One, living on what the monks brought him, exhorted and instructed the other (two) monks with Dhamma-talk; in this way the six individuals lived on what the (first) three monks brought home from their alms-round.

And while they were being exhorted and instructed by the Blessed One with Dhamma-talk, Venerable Mahānāma and Venerable Assaji obtained the dust-free, stainless vision of Dhamma: 'whatever is subject to origination, all that is subject to cessation.'

Then they who had seen Dhamma, attained Dhamma, understood Dhamma, plunged into Dhamma, overcome vacillation, dispelled all doubts, attained full confidence in the teacher's instruction by himself, without dependence on anybody else, spoke to the Blessed One, 'Venerable sir, may we receive the going forth and higher ordination in the presence of the Blessed One?' 'Come, monks, said the Blessed One, well-taught is the Dhamma; lead a holy life for the sake of complete ending of the painful. Just this was the venerable one's receiving of the higher ordination.

Then the Blessed One addressed the group of five monks: 'Monks, body is non-Self[651] ... feeling ... perception ... volitional activities ... consciousness is non-Self'

Thus spoke the Blessed One: delighted, the group of the five monks rejoiced in what the Blessed One said. While this discourse was being uttered, the minds of the group of the five monks were freed from the intoxicating inclinations without grasping. At that time, there were six arahants in the world.

Mahāvagga I.33–47: *Vinaya* I.12–13, trans. G.A.S.

Th.206 Praise for *arahants* and their qualities

Happy indeed are the arahants! No craving is found in them.

The conceit 'I am' is cut off, the net of delusion is burst asunder.

They have reached the unstirred state, their minds have limpid clarity.

They are unsoiled by the world:[652] become the supreme, without intoxicating inclinations.

Arahanta Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya III.83, trans. P.H.

Th.207 *Arahants* as those with complete mental health

This passage sees the arahant *as generally the only kind of person with complete mental health, as he or she is completely free of the 'illnesses' of attachment, hatred and delusion.*

Monks, there are two kinds of illness. What two? Bodily illness and mental illness. People are found who can enjoy bodily health for one year up to fifty years, and even for a hundred years or more. But other than those whose intoxicating inclinations have been destroyed, it is hard to find people in the world who can enjoy mental health even for a moment.

Rogā Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya II.142–143, trans. P.H.

651 On this teaching, see Th.171.

652 Like the lotus of Th.5, unsoiled by the water that rolls off it.

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Arahants as diamond-minded *Th.208*

Just as there is nothing that a diamond cannot cut, whether gem or stone, so too, with the destruction of the intoxicating inclinations, some person realizes for himself with higher knowledge, in this very life, the liberation of mind without intoxicating inclinations, the liberation by wisdom, and having entered on it, dwells in it. This person is said to have a mind like a diamond.

Vajira Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.124, trans. P.H.

Arahants as having great equanimity as regards what they experience *Th.209*

How does the venerable one know, how does he see ... so that through no clinging, his mind is liberated from intoxicating inclinations? Monks, when a monk is one with intoxicating inclinations destroyed ... this is the nature of his answer: 'Friends, regarding the seen, I abide unattracted, unrepelled, independent, non-attached, free, unfettered, with a mind made to be without barriers. Regarding the heard ... the sensed ... the discerned, I abide unattracted, unrepelled, independent, non-attached, free, unfettered, with a mind made to be without barriers.'

Chabbisodhana Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya III.30, trans. P.H.

Arahants as without fear *Th.210*

This passage gives some verses of the arahant *Adhimutta, when some bandits threatened to kill him. His fearless response led to them becoming his disciples.*

I do not have the thought, 'I have been', nor do I have the thought, 'I shall be'; conditioned things will cease to exist. What lamentation is there in that?

There is no fear for one who sees, as they have come to be, the pure and simple arising of phenomena, the pure and simple continuity of conditioned things, chieftain.

Adhimutta Thera Sutta: Theragāthā 715–716, trans. P.H.

Arahants as beyond the knowing even of gods *Th.211*

This passage describes the various qualities of an arahant, *though here referring to him by a term usually used of the Buddha:* tathāgata. *His hard-to-fathom nature echoes what is said in Th.10.*

Monks, this monk is called one who has (1) lifted the barrier, (2) whose moat has been filled in, (3) whose pillar has been uprooted, (4) whose door-bolt has been withdrawn, (5) a noble one whose banner is laid down, whose burden is laid down, who is unfettered. How? He has abandoned and cut off at the root: (1) ignorance, (2) wandering on through births that brings renewed being, (3) craving, (4) the five lower fetters[653], (5) the conceit 'I am', has cut it off at the root ...

Monks, when a monk who is thus liberated in mind, the gods with Indra, Brahmā and Pajāpati, searching, do not find: 'Dependent on this is the consciousness of a tathāgata.' Why is that? In this visible world, monks, I say a tathāgata is untraceable.

Alagaddūpama Sutta: Majjhima-nikāya I.139–140, trans. P.H.

653 See Th.200.

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MAHĀYĀNA
Lay and monastic *bodhisattvas*

M.160 Monastic and lay *bodhisattvas*

Son of good family, there are two kinds of bodhisattvas, the householder and the monastic. It is not difficult for a monastic bodhisattva to attain liberation, but it is difficult for a householder bodhisattva. Why is this? It is because the householder bodhisattva is limited by conditions which are less supportive.

Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, Taishō vol.24, text 1488, ch.4, p.1038a13–16, trans. T.T.S. and D.S.

M.161 Monastic and lay life contrasted

This passage praises the advantages of monastic life.

The household life is dusty and defiled.[654] The renunciant life is excellent. The household life is restricted. The renunciant life is free of hindrances. The household life is filled with impurity. The renunciant life is the abandonment of impurity. The household life draws you into unwholesomeness. The renunciant life draws you into wholesomeness ...

The household life is filled with loss. The renunciant life is free of loss. The household life is filled with sorrow. The renunciant life is filled with joy ...

Someone who lives the household life derives little benefit from it. Someone who lives the renunciant life derives a great abundance of benefit from it ... In the household life one's torments multiply. The renunciant life is free of torments.

In the household life one is never contented. In the renunciant life one finds contentment ...

The household life is filled with anger. The renunciant life is filled with loving kindness. In the household life one is carrying a burden. In the renunciant life one has put one's burden down.

Ugra-paripṛcchā Sūtra, Taishō vol.11, text 310, p.476a24–26, a29–b3, b08–10, b14, c04–05, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

M.162 A lay *bodhisattva* can be like, and even excel, a renunciant one

This passage, though, says that lay life, lived well, has great scope for spiritual development.

If householder bodhisattvas possesses five qualities, then those bodhisattvas are training in the precepts of a renunciant. What are these five qualities? They are: (1) that even though those householder bodhisattvas are living at home, they are generous with all of their possessions, with minds set on omniscience, they do not seek any karmic benefit from their actions; ... (2) ... that their practice of celibacy[655] is pure and they do not cultivate desire; ... (3) ... that they go to a secluded place to practise the four meditative absorptions; ... (4) ... that they put

654 As described by the Buddha at L.8.

655 Here the ideal lay *bodhisattva* is akin to the celibate non-returners of Th.204.

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great effort into their training in wisdom, and help all living beings, out of compassion; ... and (5) ... that they protect the Dharma, and guide others in their practice ...

Ānanda, this householder Ugra will serve all the Tathāgatas who appear in this fortunate eon, ... and protect the true Dharma. Although he will always live as a householder, he will practise the precepts of a renunciant, and the awakening of the Tathāgatas will be heard of far and wide.

Ānanda asked the householder Ugra, 'What benefit or happiness do you see in the household life?' ... He replied, 'Venerable One, out of great compassion, I do not seek peace and happiness for myself. Venerable Ānanda, a bodhisattva, a great being, will endure any kind of suffering rather than abandon living beings.'

When Ugra had said these words, the Blessed One spoke to Ānanda, saying, 'Ānanda, in this fortunate eon, this householder Ugra will bring a great many living beings to maturity whilst living as a householder – more than a renunciant bodhisattva could in a hundred eons, or even a hundred thousand eons. Why is this? Ānanda, it is because even the good qualities of a hundred thousand renunciant bodhisattvas do not match up to the good qualities of this householder Ugra.'

Ugra-paripṛcchā Sūtra, Taishō vol.11, text 310, p.479c28–480a08, 480a19–29, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

Monastic discipline

The Buddha urges his monastic disciples on *M.163*

This passage gives an inspiring set of guidelines for monastics.

Monks, after I am gone you should respect and venerate the code of monastic discipline as if it were a light in the darkness, or as if you were poor and had found a precious jewel. Understand that it is this code that will be your great teacher – it will be as if I am still in the world.

Those who wish to keep their practice of the precepts pure should not engage in selling or trading. They should not own fields or houses, keep slaves, servant girls, or animals. They should stay away from all kinds of property or wealth as they would avoid the flames of hell. They should not cut down trees, cultivate the soil, or dig the earth. They should not practise medicine or fortune telling. They should not stare at the night sky, calculating the dates of the waxing and waning moon. They should not do any of these things.

They should restrain their bodies, eating at the appropriate times, and living in a pure and independent way. They should not engage in worldly affairs or serve in government. They should not make use of spells and magic potions. They should not befriend powerful people, looking for favours out of lust or pride. They should not engage in any of these activities.

They should seek liberation with an upright mind and proper mindfulness. They should not hide their flaws, or give a false impression of themselves to confuse people. They should know how much of the four

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requisites of monastic life[656] they need, and be content with that. They should not accumulate and hoard what they receive.

This is a brief summary of how to observe the precepts. Following the precepts properly is the foundation of liberation. That is why they are called the *prātimokṣa*.[657] It is by practising the precepts that meditative absorption and meditative concentration can be attained, that suffering can be extinguished, and wisdom attained. Therefore, monks, you should keep your practice of the precepts pure, and not break any of them. Those who are able to keep their practice of the precepts pure will be able to develop wholesome qualities. Those who are not able to do so will obtain no karmic benefit, and they will not attain wisdom. The precepts are the most important and the most secure source of karmic benefit ...

Monks, during the day you should apply mental effort to training yourselves in good qualities, never missing an opportunity to do so. Do not waste the time just before you go to sleep or when you have just woken up. At midnight, you should recite sūtras to keep yourself alert. Do not let your life pass you by without achieving anything on account of sleep. Be mindful of the fact that the fire of impermanence is consuming the universe. Seek liberation right away, don't go to sleep. The defilements are lying in wait like a thief that wants to kill you, more dangerous than your worst enemy. How can you lie there asleep and not wake up? The poisonous snakes of the defilements sleep in your own mind. It is like there is a black viper sleeping in your room, and the precepts are a hook you can use to remove it. You can only sleep securely once it has been removed. Someone who goes to sleep without removing the snake has no conscience.

Allowing oneself to be guided by a sensitive conscience is the greatest of all adornments. Conscience is like an iron hook which can pull you back from going against the Dharma. Therefore, monks, you should always cultivate a sensitive conscience without letting your guard down for a moment. If you go against your conscience, you will lose all of your karmic benefit. Those who regret their unwholesome actions develop good qualities. Those who do not regret their unwholesome actions are no better than animals ...

Monks, if you apply yourselves with vigour then you will not find anything difficult. So apply yourselves with vigour, and you will be like a little stream that wears away rock by flowing constantly. If a practitioner's mind is often inattentive, a great deal of effort will be wasted. It is like rubbing two sticks together to make a fire. If you keep stopping, it will be very difficult to get the fire going, no matter how badly you want to ...

Monks, in order to obtain karmic benefit, you must abandon all self-indulgence, just as you would stay away from a spiteful enemy. The greatly compassionate Blessed One has taught that the highest state brings benefit to all. You must apply yourselves with vigour to this teaching. Whether you are dwelling in the mountains, in a marsh, or

656 Food, shelter, robes, and medicine.

657 The word *prātimokṣa*, elsewhere translated as 'code of monastic discipline' can be interpreted to mean literally 'that which leads to liberation'.

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in a quiet spot in the forest, be mindful of the Dharma you have been taught. Do not forget it. Apply yourself with unwavering vigour to your task. Do not bring upon yourself the anxiety and regret of dying in vain.

Like a good doctor, I understand the sickness and prescribe the medicine. It is not the doctor's fault if you do not take the medicine. Like a good guide, I give good directions. It is not the guide's fault if you listen to the directions and then do not follow them.

'Bequeathed Teaching *Sūtra'/Yijiao jing*, *Taishō* vol.12, text 389, pp.1110c20–1111a07, 1111a27–b09, 1111c17–20, 1112a14–1112a20, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

A day of no work is a day of no eating *M.164*

In the Chan/Zen school, a requirement for physical work for monastics was introduced to help support fellow-feeling in a common task and complement the stillness of meditation. Such work included gardening, though the classical monastic code does not allow digging the ground as it could lead to harming small creatures in it.

Communal labour: The practice of communal labour applies to those who are strong, those who are weak, and those of average strength. In order for many people to live together harmoniously, they have to work together to support each other. The manager of the monastery should report to the abbot and send word to the chief monk. The director of the practice hall should divide up the tasks and put up a notice indicating that there is to be a period of communal labour. He should put up small pieces of paper indicating to each monk where and when they are to report for their duty. At the sound of the wooden fish or the drum, everyone should roll up their sleeves and quickly go and apply themselves to the communal labour. With the exception of the monk who is guarding the living quarters, the monk who is acting as the practice hall attendant, the old, the sick, and visitors, everyone is to participate equally. Think of our predecessor who warned, 'A day of no work is a day of no eating'.

'The *Baizhang* Zen Monastic Regulations', *Taishō* vol.48, text 2025, Chapter VII, pp.1144a26–b04, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

VAJRAYĀNA

Monastic life

In Tibetan Buddhism, many monks and nuns follow the ten basic monastic precepts, with a smaller core following the full monastic code of higher ordination. Respected teachers known as lamas or gurus can be lay or monastic, and there are also non-ordained yogis practising in secluded places.

The four rules that lead to defeat in the monastic life if broken *V.84*

*This passage is on the key rules that, if broken, lead to a monk or nun to be expelled from the Sangha. Almost identically worded rules are also found in the monastic code of the Theravādins (see heading above *Th.193) and the*

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Mahāyānists of East Asia. They rule out sexual intercourse, theft, killing a human or aiding or inciting suicide, and intentionally false claims to advanced meditative states and insights.

Venerable Ones, there are four kinds of actions which mean that one has been defeated in the monastic life. They are included in the Prātimokṣa Sūtra, which is recited twice a month.

1. If a monk has taken up the life of monastic training, and has not withdrawn from the training or admitted his weakness, but abandons the practice of celibacy by engaging in sexual intercourse – even with an animal – then that monk has been defeated. He is no longer part of the community.

2. If a monk takes something belonging to someone else which has not been given to him, whether in a village or in the forest, in a manner that could be described as theft, in such a way that were a king or a minister to get hold of him they would have him killed, tied up, or banished, saying, 'You are a criminal, a fool, an idiot, a thief!', then that monk who has taken what has not been given to him has been defeated. He is no longer part of the community.

3. If a monk, consciously and with his own hand, takes the life of a human being or a being that has human form, or facilitates their death by providing them with a knife, going in search of an assassin, encouraging them to kill themselves, or speaking of the advantages of suicide, saying, 'This life is hard, filled with impurity and evil. What do you gain from it? It would be better for you to die than to live', and does so intentionally and deliberately, then if such actions result in death, that monk has been defeated. He is no longer part of the community.

4. If a monk claims to have attained superhuman qualities, the kind of knowledge, vision or attainments which are only attained by the noble ones, when he does not, in fact, possess these attainments, and does not know for certain that he has attained these things, and says, 'I understand this. I know this. I see this', and if this unfortunate monk should at a later time see things clearly and say, 'Venerable Ones, I do not know what I said I knew. I do not understand what I said I understood. What I said were empty, useless, false words', whether he says this after having been asked about it by others or not, then unless he genuinely believed what he said, that monk has been defeated. He is no longer part of the community.

Venerable Ones, I have now explained to you the four kinds of actions which mean that one has been defeated in the monastic life. Any monk who has committed one of these offences is not to live or eat with monks. He is what he was before.[658] He has been defeated, and is no longer part of the community. So, Venerable Ones, I ask you – Are you completely pure in this regard? A second time and a third I ask you – Are you completely pure in this regard? Because of your silence, Venerable Ones, I understand you to be completely pure in this regard.

Prātimokṣa Sūtra of the Mūla-sarvāstivādins, section 2, Prāt Kj ca 3a7–4a1, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

—

658 i.e. a layman

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Advice to novices V.85

In the following passage, Atīśa[659] advises the novice monks of Tibet to give up all worldly activities and focus on solitary practice of the Dharma.

When the venerable Atīśa was staying in Yerpadrak (near Lhasa), he gave the following precept ... : 'Noble sons, consider carefully what I am now going to tell you. Generally speaking, people in this dark age[660] have very short lives and many things to learn. Since there is no certainty about the length of your life-span, you should make effort to give up your (worldly) ambitions quickly. If you have possessions and make your living as a layperson does, then you should not say you are a monastic. Though you may live in a monastery, as long as you have apprehensions about forsaking your mundane activities you should not say "I am a monastic". As long as your mind is attracted to the pleasures of this life and is full of ill-will, do not say "I am a monastic".

Though you may live in a monastery; as long as you mix with worldly people and waste your time on idle worldly talk with those around you, do not say "I am a monastic". As long as you cannot tolerate even a small harm done to you by others and cannot give even a small help to another person, do not say "I am a monastic bodhisattva". If you say you are, you will be lying to the laypeople. Though you might be able to make them believe that you are one, you will not deceive those who have unhindered sight of everything, nor those who have the Dharma-eye; and the results of your actions will follow you.

The whole point of living in a monastery is to avoid mingling with worldly people and to give up attachment to relatives and friends. Once, by giving them up, you have eliminated thoughts of longing for pleasure and all causes and conditions of distraction, you will discover your own precious awakening-mind. So do not, even for a moment, follow the mind which is apprehensive about forsaking mundane activities. As you have not followed the way of Dharma so far and your mental skills are not strong enough, worldly thoughts will arise repeatedly and with great power in your mind. Unless you apply some specific antidotes against them there is no point in staying in a remote place, just like the birds and the wild animals living there ...

In short, though you may live in a monastery, the Dharma will not help you unless you renounce the affairs of this life and turn your mind away from pursuing worldly ambition. Give up all activities! If you think you can act (as before) without neglecting (Dharma) either in this life or your future lives, your Dharma practice will become secondary, and if it is secondary, it can only be hypocritical and pretentious ...

Always avoid bad company, and live in obscure places. Never stay in one spot, accumulating intoxicating inclinations. Whatever you do, always act in harmony with the Dharma. Whatever happens to you, use it as an antidote against the defilements. Because acting like that is authentic Dharma, you should strive at doing that. In case you manage to develop some good mental qualities, do not get puffed up with pride, falling under the power of Māra.[661]

659 See V.10 on Atiśa.
660 Kaliyuga.
661 The evil Deadly One: see LI.5 and 7 above.

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Stay in remote places, pacify and tame yourself, have few desires, and be content. Do not fixate on your own good qualities and do not find fault with others. Act without fear or anxiety. Do not aggrandize concepts but always have a good heart. Undistracted by wrong things, always think of the Dharma!

Remain humble and be patient if attacked. Beware of bragging. Arrest all ambition, always be kind! Be moderate in whatever you do. You should be easy to please and easy to sustain.

Run away from the worldly like a wild animal. Unless you renounce the ways of the world you are not a Dharma practitioner. If you have not abandoned the four ways of earning livelihood,[662] you are not a renunciant. Unless you have given up desires you are not a monastic. If you do not have loving kindness and compassion you are not a bodhisattva. Unless you put an end to worldly activities you are not a great meditator. Do not be misled by desire!

In short, when you stay at a monastery, just practise the Dharma without caring for anything else so that you do not have any regret when you die.'

At another time, Atīśa said: 'This dark age is not the time for boasting; it is the time to show perseverance. It is not the time to take a high seat but to take a low seat. It is not the time to rely on attendants but to stay in solitude. It is not the time to discipline students; it is the time to discipline your own self. It is not the time to follow the words of the teaching; it is the time to think about its meaning. It is not the time to travel to and fro; it is the time to stay in one place.'

'Miscellaneous Oral Precepts', ff. (folio number) 9b–15a, trans. T.A.

662 Agriculture, trade, animal farming, and lending money on interest

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CHAPTER 12

EXEMPLARY LIVES

THERAVĀDA

Great *arahant* monk disciples

Foremost monk disciples and their qualities ***Th.212***

This list of foremost monks gives a good panorama of the kind of qualities found in Buddhist monks at the time of the Buddha.[663]

Monks, the foremost of my monk disciples in seniority is Aññā-koṇḍañña. The other foremost of my monk disciples are: among those with great wisdom, Sāriputta; among those with great psychic potency, Mahā-moggallāna; among those who expound the ascetic practices, Mahā-kassapa; among those with the divine eye, Anuruddha; among those of eminent families, Bhaddiya Kāḷigodhāyaputta; among those with a sweet voice, Bhaddiya the dwarf; among those with the lion's roar (of fearless teaching), Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja; among those who speak on the Dhamma, Puṇṇa Mantāṇuputta; among those who explain in detail the meaning of what has been stated in brief, Mahā-kaccāna.

The foremost of my monk disciples are: among those who create the mind-made body, Culla-panthaka; among those skilled in mental transformation, Culla-panthaka; among those skilled in the transformation of perception, Mahā-panthaka; among those who dwell without conflict, Subhūti; among those worthy of gifts, Subhūti; among forest dwellers, Revata Khadiravaniya; among those who practise meditative absorption, Kaṅkhā-revata; among those who arouse vigour, Soṇa Koḷivīsa; among those who are excellent speakers, Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa; among those who gain (offerings), Sīvalī; amongst those resolved through faith, Vakkali.

The foremost of my monk disciples are: among those who desire training, Rāhula (the Buddha's son); among those who have gone forth out of faith, Raṭṭhapāla; among those who are first to take meal tickets (chosen by lot), Kuṇḍadhāna; among those who compose inspired verses, Vaṅgīsa; among those who inspire confidence in all respects, Upasena Vaṅgantaputta; among those who assign lodgings, Dabba Mallaputta; among those pleasing and agreeable to the deities, Piḷindavaccha; among those who quickly attain higher knowledge, Bāhiya Dārucīriya; among those with variegated speech (illustrated with many similes and reasons), Kumāra-kassapa; among those who have attained the analytical knowledges, Mahā-koṭṭhita.

The foremost of my monk disciples are: among those who are learned, Ānanda; among those with a quick grasp, Ānanda; among those who

663 See Nyanaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997, pp.1-244, and search for them by name at: http://www.accesstoinsight.org/

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are resolute, Ānanda; among those who are personal attendants, Ānanda; among those with a large retinue, Uruvela-kassapa; among those who inspire confidence in families, Kāludāyi; among those with good health, Bakkula; among those who recollect past lives, Sobhita; among the upholders of monastic discipline, Upāli; among those who exhort nuns, Nandaka; among those who guard the doors of the sense faculties, Nanda;[664] among those who exhort monks, Mahā-kappina; among those with skill in the fire element (by meditative power), Sāgata; among those who receive eloquent discourses, Rādha; among those who wear coarse robes, Mogharāja.

Etad-agga-vagga: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.23–25, trans. P.H.

Th.213 The attainments of five hundred *arahant* monks, especially Sāriputta

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatthī, in the eastern park in the mansion of Migāra's mother, together with a large community of monks, with five hundred monks, all of them arahants. Now on the holy day of the fifteenth (of the month), the Blessed One was sitting in the open surrounded by the community of monks in order to hold the Pavāranā.[665]

Then, having surveyed the silent community of monks, the Blessed One addressed the monks thus: 'Monks, come now, let me invite you: Is there any deed of mine, either bodily or verbal, which you would censure?' When this was said, Venerable Sāriputta rose from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, and, raising his joined hands in reverential salutation towards the Blessed One, said to him: 'Venerable sir, there is no deed of the Blessed One, either bodily or verbal, that we censure. Venerable sir, for the Blessed One is the originator of the path unarisen before, the producer of the path unproduced before, the declarer of the path undeclared before. He is the knower of the path, the discoverer of the path, the one skilled in the path. And his disciples now dwell following that path and become possessed of it afterwards. Venerable sir, I invite the Blessed One: Is there any deed of mine, either bodily or verbal, which the Blessed One would censure?'

'Sāriputta, there is no deed of yours, either bodily or verbal, that I censure. Sāriputta, for you are wise, one of great wisdom, of wide wisdom, of joyous wisdom, of swift wisdom, of sharp wisdom, of penetrative wisdom. Just as the eldest son of a Wheel-turning monarch properly keeps in motion the wheel of sovereignty set in motion by his father, so do you, Sāriputta, properly keep in motion the wheel of the Dhamma set in motion by me.'

'Venerable sir, if the Blessed One does not censure any deed of mine, bodily or verbal, does he censure any deed, bodily or verbal, of these five hundred monks?' 'Sāriputta, there is no deed, bodily or verbal, of these five hundred monks that I censure as of these five hundred

664 See L.33.

665 The ceremony marking the ending of the three-months 'rains' (*Vassa*) period of monastic retreat, when monks who have lived together for the *Vassa* ask forgiveness from each other for any offence committed, whether seen, heard or suspected.

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monks, sixty monks are triple-knowledge bearers, sixty monks are bearers of the six-fold supernormal knowledges, sixty monks are liberated in both ways, while the rest are liberated by wisdom.[666]

Pavārana Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya I.410–414, trans. G.A.S.

Chief disciples Sāriputta and Moggallāna *Th.214*

*These two were friends in lay life and had been disciples of a sceptic teacher before becoming disciples of the Buddha. They promised to tell each other if either found a way to the deathless (*Vinaya *I.39).*

My two chief disciples are named Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

Vepulla-pabbatam Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.192, trans. P.H.

Monks a monk endowed with faith, rightly aspiring, should aspire thus: 'May I become like Sāriputta and Moggallāna!' This is the standard and criterion for my monk disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

Āyācana-vagga 12, *Sutta* 1: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.88, trans. P.H.

Cultivate the friendship of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, monks, associate with Sāriputta and Moggallāna. They are wise and helpful to their companions in the holy life. 'Monks, like a mother is Sāriputta; like nurse is Moggallāna. Sāriputta, monks, trains others for the fruit that is stream-entry; Moggallāna for the highest goal (arahantship). Sāriputta, monks, is able to proclaim, teach, describe, establish, reveal, analyse and make plain the four Truths of the Noble Ones.

Sacca-vibhaṅga Sūtta: Majjhima-nikāya III.248, trans. P.H.

Sāriputta *Th.215*

Here we see some of the qualities of Sāriputta, who was also known as Upatissa. While extremely wise and discerning, he could let go of the process of thinking once in the second meditative absorption, and his calm and equanimity was such that, to undiscerning people, he might seem as having a dull mind, rather than a sharp one. He was noted, for example, for being able to analytically identify the ingredient processes of any experience.

Forests are delightful, where (ordinary) people find no delight. Those rid of desire will delight there; they are not seekers after sensual pleasures.

If one should see a seer of faults, a teller of one's errors, a prudent man, one should associate with such a clever man like a revealer of treasure. It fares better, not worse, for one who associates with such a one. ...

Near the foot of a tree, with shaven head, clad in outer robe, the elder Upatissa, supreme in wisdom, meditates.

Having attained to non-thinking (in the second meditative absorption), the disciple of the fully enlightened one is straightway possessed of noble silence.

666 All these kinds of monks are *arahants*: the first have direct knowledge of past lives, of how beings are reborn according to their karma, and of nirvana and the other Truths of the Noble Ones; the second kind have these knowledges plus supernormal powers, mind-reading and the ability to hear at great distances; the third have experienced nirvana, the meditative absorptions and the formless attainments; the fourth have experienced nirvana and some of the meditative absorptions.

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Just as a rocky mountain is unmoving, well-founded, so a monk, like a mountain, does not tremble after the destruction of delusion. ...

Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, not conceited, he shakes off evil qualities as the wind shakes off the leaves of a tree. ...

Having attained the perfection of wisdom, having great discernment, a great sage, not stupid but seeming stupid (to the undiscerning), he always wanders, (with the fires of the defilements) quenched.

Sāriputta's verses: *Theragāthā* 992-993, 998-1000, 1006 and 1015, trans. P.H.

Th.216 Mahā-moggallāna

*(Mahā-)Moggallāna reports that at the time of a past Buddha, he had been a Māra named Dūsī (*Majjhima-nikāya *I.333), yet was now awakened under Gotama Buddha.*

Let us live in the forest, living on alms-food, delighting in whatever scraps come into our alms-bowl, tearing apart the army of death, being well-composed inwardly. ...

(To Māra:) For whoever would think of painting the sky with yellow or any other colour, that is only a source of trouble.

This mind, well-composed inside, is like the sky. Evil-minded one, do not attack me as a moth attacks a bonfire. ...

Urged on by the self-developed one, who was bearing his last body, I shook with my big toe the palace of Migāra's mother (to quieten some lax and noisy monks[667]).

The flashes of lightning fall upon the cleft of Vebhāra and Paṇḍavas, but one gone to the cleft in the mountain, the son of the incomparable venerable one, meditates. ...

By whom the thousandfold world, over the eon of Brahmā, is known in a moment, that monk, having mastery in the strands of supernormal power and in (knowledge) of passing away and rebirth, sees the deities in time.

Sāriputta, indeed, the monk who has reached the far shore, may be so supreme by reason of his wisdom, ethical discipline, and calm.

In a moment I can fashion the bodily form of 100,000 times 10,000,000 (people); I am skilled in (supernormal) transformations; I am master of supernormal powers.

Mahā-moggallāna's verses: *Theragāthā* 1146, 1155–56, 1164, 1167 and 1181–1183, trans. P.H.

Th.217 Mahā-kassapa and Ānanda prepare for the first communal recitation of the Buddha's teachings

This passage concerns the time soon after the death of the Buddha. The most senior and influential arahant *disciple still alive was Mahā-kassapa, an austere and nature-loving monk who convened a group of* arahants *to recite the Buddha's teachings to ensure their proper memory and transmission (this being generally known as the 'first council'). The monk Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant for many years (see L.65 and Th.212), had an excellent memory and knowledge of what the Buddha had taught, but he was not yet an* arahant, *though still a noble one on the path to this, being a stream-enterer.*

667 *Saṃyutta-nikāya* V.269–70.

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On the night before the assembly to chant the teachings, he made a special effort to become an arahant *by meditating all night. At the point where he had just given up his efforts, which must have been too forceful, and was lying down to sleep for a short while, he attains arahantship.*

(Mahā-kassapa:) 'Come let us, friends, chant Dhamma and Vinaya (the monastic discipline) before what is not Dhamma shines out and Dhamma is withheld, before what is not vinaya shines out and vinaya is withheld, before those who speak what is not-Dhamma become strong and those who speak Dhamma become feeble, before those who speak what is not-vinaya become strong and those who speak vinaya become feeble.' 'Well then, honoured sir, let the elder select monks.'

Then Venerable Mahā-kassapa selected five hundred arahants, less one. Monks spoke to Venerable Mahā-kassapa: 'Honoured sir, this Ānanda, although he is still a learner, could not be one to follow a false course through desire, hatred, delusion or fear; and he has mastered much Dhamma and Vinaya under the Blessed One. Well now, honoured sir, let the elder select Ānanda as well.' Then Venerable Mahā-kassapa selected Venerable Ānanda as well. ...

Then the monks who were elders went to Rājagaha to chant Dhamma and Vinaya. ... Then Venerable Ānanda, thinking, 'Tomorrow is the assembly. Now it is not suitable in me that I, being (only) a learner, should go to the assembly.' And having spent much of that night in mindfulness in regard to the body, when the night was nearly spent, thinking 'I will lie down', he inclined his body, but (before) his head had touched the mattress and as his feet became free from the ground, in that interval his mind was freed from the intoxicating inclinations without grasping. Then Venerable Ānanda, being an arahant, went to the assembly.

Cullavagga XI.1–6: *Vinaya* II.285–286, trans. P.H.

Ānanda *Th.218*

Of great learning, a brilliant speaker, attendant of the Buddha, having laid down his burden, unfettered, (Ānanda) Gotama lies down to sleep. ...

82,000 (teachings) I received from the Buddha, 2,000 from the monks. These 84,000 are current teachings.

The man of little learning grows old like an ox; his flesh increases, but his wisdom does not increase.

The man of great learning who despises the man of little learning because of his learning, seems to me like a blind lamp-bearer....

For 25 years I served the Blessed One with deeds ... words ... and thoughts, of loving kindness, like a shadow that never leaves.

I paced up and down behind the Buddha while he paced up and down. While the Dhamma was being taught, knowledge arose in me.

Ānanda's verses: *Theragāthā* 1021, 1024-1026 and 1041–1044, trans. P.H.

A dwarf, but an *arahant* of great power *Th.219*

This passage makes clear that physical deformity can go hand-in-hand with great spiritual accomplishment.

Then Venerable Bhaddiya the Dwarf approached the Blessed One. The Blessed One saw him coming in the distance and addressed the monks thus, 'Monks, do you see that monk coming, ugly, unsightly, deformed, despised among the monks?' 'Yes, venerable sir.' 'Monks, that

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monk is of great spiritual power and might. It is not easy to find an attainment which that monk has not already attained. ...

Geese, herons, and peacocks, elephants, and spotted deer, all are frightened of the lion regardless of their bodies' size.

In the same way, among human beings the small one endowed with wisdom – he is the one that is truly great, not the fool with a well-built body.

Bhaddi Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya II.279, trans. G.A.S.

Great *arahant* nun disciples

The order of nuns with higher ordination (as bhikkhunī/bhikṣuṇīs*) has survived into the present day in China, Taiwan, Korea and Vietnam, though in the Tibetan region women have only been able to take the lower ordination. Both forms of ordination for women died out in Theravāda lands around the thirteenth century, though women with a form of semi-ordained life have continued to exist there. The late twentieth century saw great efforts to revive the Theravāda order of full nuns, with the help of nuns from East Asia. The 1990s saw the order re-established in Sri Lanka, though it will take time before it is accepted by senior monks in all Theravāda countries, as there is debate over whether a revival is possible.*

Th.220 The origin of the nuns' monastic order

This passage recounts how the Buddha first allowed women to ordain as nuns, the request for this coming from Mahā-pajāpatī, his mother's sister, who had brought him up after his mother died soon after his birth, and she had married his father. There is scholarly debate over the meaning, implications, and historicity of this passage. The ordination of women as Buddhist nuns helped raise the status of women in India.

Then Venerable Ānanda spoke to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, are women competent, if they retire from home life to the homeless one, under the Dhamma and discipline announced by the Tathāgata, to attain the fruit that is stream-entry, to attain to the fruit that is once returning, to attain to the fruit that is non-returning, to attain to arahantship?'

'Ānanda, women are competent, if they retire from home life to the homeless one, under the Dhamma and discipline announced by the Tathāgata, to attain the fruit that is stream-entry, to attain to the fruit that is once returning, to attain to the fruit that is non-returning, to attain to arahantship.'

'Venerable sir, since the women are thus competent, (also) consider, venerable sir, how great a benefactress Mahā-pajāpatī Gotamī has been. She is the sister of the mother of the Blessed One, and as step-mother, nurse, and giver of milk, she suckled the Blessed One on the death of his mother. Venerable sir, let women retire from the home life to the homeless one, under the Dhamma and discipline announced by the Tathāgata.'

'Ānanda, if Mahā-pajāpatī Gotamī will accept eight weighty regulations, let it be reckoned to her as her ordination: (1) A nun of even a hundred years' standing shall greet respectfully, rise to meet, entreat humbly, and perform all respectful offices for a monk, even if he be but that day admitted to the Sangha. This regulation shall be honoured, es-

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teemed, revered, and worshiped, and is not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. (2) A nun shall not keep residence in a district where there are no monks. This regulation shall be honoured, esteemed, revered, and worshiped, and is not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. (3) On each half-month a nun shall await from the congregation of the monks the appointing of the day for reciting the monastic rules and someone to come and administer the admonition. This regulation shall be honoured, esteemed, revered, and worshiped, and is not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. (4) At the end of residence a nun shall invite criticism in both congregations in regard to what has been seen, or heard, or suspected. This regulation shall be honoured, esteemed, revered, and worshiped, and is not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. (5) If a nun has offended against a weighty rule, she shall undergo penance of half a month toward both the congregations. This regulation shall be honoured, esteemed, revered, and worshiped, and is not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. (6) When a female novice has spent her two years in the practice of the six rules, she shall seek ordination from both the congregations. This regulation shall be honoured, esteemed, revered, and worshiped, and is not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. (7) A nun shall not revile or abuse a monk in any manner. This regulation shall be honoured, esteemed, revered, and worshiped, and is not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. (8) From this day on the nuns shall not be allowed to reprove the monks officially, but the monks shall be allowed to reprove the nuns officially. This regulation shall be honoured, esteemed, revered, and worshiped, and is not to be transgressed as long as life shall last. Ānanda, if Mahā-pajāpatī Gotamī will accept these eight weighty regulations, let it be reckoned to her as her ordination.'

Then Ānanda ... approached Mahā-pajāpatī Gotamī, having approached, he spoke thus to her: 'Gotamī, if now you will accept these eight weighty regulations, it shall be reckoned to you as your ordination.' 'Venerable Ānanda, just as a woman or a man, youthful, young, and fond of ornament, having bathed his head, and obtained a wreath of blue lotuses, or a wreath of jasmine flowers, or a wreath of *atimuttaka* flowers, would take it up with both hands, and place it on the head, the noblest part of the body; Venerable Ānanda, in exactly the same way I do take up these eight weighty regulations, not to be transgressed as long as life shall last.'

Then Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One; and having approached and greeted the Blessed One, he sat down respectfully at one side. Seated respectfully at one side, Venerable Ānanda spoke thus to the Blessed One: 'Venerable sir, Mahā-pajāpatī Gotamī has accepted the eight weighty regulations; the sister of the mother of the Blessed One has been ordained.'

Cullavagga X.3–5: *Vinaya* II.254–255, trans. G.A.S.

Th.221 Foremost nun disciples and their qualities

Monks, a nun endowed with faith, rightly aspiring, should aspire thus: 'May I become like the nuns Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā!' This is the standard and criterion for my nun disciples, Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā.

Āyācana-vagga 12, *sutta* 2: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.88, trans. P.H.

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Monks, the foremost of my nun disciples in seniority is Mahā-pajāpatī Gotamī. The other foremost of my nun disciples are: among those with great wisdom, Khemā; among those with psychic potency, Uppalavaṇṇā; among those who uphold the monastic discipline, Paṭācārā; among speakers on Dhamma, Dhammadinnā; among those who practise meditative absorption, Nandā; among those who arouse vigour, Soṇā; among those with the divine eye, Sakulā; among those who quickly attain higher knowledge, Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā; among those who recollect past lives, Bhaddā Kāpilānī; among those who attain great supernormal knowledge, Bhaddā Kaccāna;[668] among those who wear coarse robes, Kisāgotamī; among those resolved through faith, Sigālamātā.

Etad-agga-vagga: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.25, trans. P.H.

Th.222 Khemā

In this passage, King Pasenadi wishes to visit a renunciant or brahmin, and is in time directed to the nun Khemā:[669]

'Now a good report concerning this revered lady has spread about thus: "She is wise, competent, intelligent, learned, a splendid speaker, ingenious." Let your majesty visit her.'

... [The king goes to her and asks her if it can be said of a Tathāgata that he 'is', 'is not', 'both is and is not' or neither is nor is no' after death, but she does not accept any of these (see Th.10 and 20).] 'What now, revered lady, is the cause and reason why this has not been declared by the Blessed One?'

'Well, then, Great king, I will question you about this same matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, great king ... do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the water in the great ocean thus: "There are so many gallons of water", or ... "There are so many hundreds of thousands of gallons of water"?' 'No, revered lady. For what reason? Because the great ocean is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom.'

'So too, great king, that material form by which one describing the Tathāgata might describe him has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated so that it is no more subject to future arising. The Tathāgata, great king, is liberated from reckoning in terms of material form; he is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom like the great ocean. [Hence the four above options on the Tathāgata after death do not apply; the same is then said replacing 'material form' by each of feeling, perception, the volitional activities, and consciousness. The king later asks the same question of the Buddha and receives exactly the same reply, as in Th.10]

Khemā Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.374–377, trans. P.H.

Th.223 Uppalavaṇṇā

Uppalavaṇṇā was very beautiful and sought in marriage by many before her ordination.

'Having seen the peril in sensual pleasures, and renunciation as a

668 The *Aṅguttara-nikāya* commentary (I.204–5) identifies her as the Buddha's ex-wife.

669 See Nyanaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997, pp.263–269.

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form security, I myself went forth at Rājagaha from the house into the homeless state.

I know that I have lived before, the divine eye has been purified; and there is knowledge of the state of mind (of others); the (divine) ear-element has been purified;

Spernormal power too has been realized by me; I have attained destruction of the intoxicating inclinations: (these) six supernormal knowledges have been realized by me; the Buddha's teaching has been done.

Having fashioned a four-horse chariot by supernormal power, having paid homage at the Buddha's feet, the glorious protector of the word, I (stood on one side).'

(Māra:) ... 'you stand there alone at the foot of the tree; you have not even any companion; O child, are you not afraid of rogues?'

'Even if 100,000 rogues like you were to come together, I should not move a hair's breadth, I should not even shake. What will you alone do to me, Māra?'

Uppalavaṇṇā's verses: *Therīgāthā,* 226–231, trans. P.H.

A woman goes beyond her grief for her dead daughter and becomes an *arahant* — *Th.224*

In these verses, a now awakened nun recalls how she had grieved at the death of her daughter, but the Buddha had said that she had grieved for many daughters in past lives, helping her to remove the 'dart' of grief and turn to the path of Buddhist practice.

'In the wood you cry out: "O Jīva". Ubbirī, understand yourself. 84,000 (daughters), all with the name Jīva, have been burned in this funeral fire. Which of these do you grieve for?'

'Truly he has plucked out my dart, hard to see, nestling in my heart, which grief for my daughter he has thrust away for me, overcome by grief.

Today that (same) I have my dart plucked out; I am without hunger, quenched. I go to the awakened sage, the Dhamma and the Sangha as a refuge.'

Ubbirī's verses: *Therīgāthā* 51–53,trans. G.A.S.

A woman rejected by three husbands becomes a nun, and then an *arahant* — *Th.225*

These verses paint a graphic picture of a woman rejected by three husbands and then ordaining as a nun who becomes awakened. In verses continuing from the ones below, she attributes her difficulties with her husbands to karma from a bad action seven lives ago: as a man, he had sex with the wife of another man. The karmic results of this were: rebirth in hell, then in turn as three animals who were castrated - a monkey, a goat and a calf - then as a hermaphrodite human slave, then as a poor girl taken as a second wife, then her final life as a woman rejected by her husbands. The verses thus illustrate the working of karma, sex-change across rebirths, and the ability to go beyond karmic limitations.

In the flower-named city, Pāṭaliputta, in the best part of the earth, there were two nuns, members of the Sakya clan, possessed of good qualities.

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One of them called Isidāsī, the other called Bodhī, both possessed of ethical discipline, delighting in meditation and study, having great learning, with defilements shaken off.

Having wandered for alms, having made their meals, with washed bowls, seated happily in a lonely place, they uttered these words:

'Noble Isidāsī, you are lovely, your youth has not yet faded. Having seen what fault are you then intent on renunciation?'

Thus being asked, Isidāsī in the lonely place, proficient in teaching the Dhamma, spoke this utterance: 'Bodhī, listen to how I went forth.

In Ujjenī, best of cities, my father was a merchant, restrained by virtuous conduct. I was his only daughter, dear, and charming, and beloved.

Then from Sāketa came men, belonging to a most noble family, to woo me; a merchant with many jewels sent them. To him my father gave me as a daughter-in-law.

Approaching morning and evening I did obeisance with my head to my father-in-law and mother-in-law. I paid homage at their feet, as I had been instructed.

Having seen my husband's sisters, or his brothers, or his retinue, even my one and only beloved, I trembled and gave them a seat.

I gratified them with food and drink and hard food and what was stored there. I brought it forth and gave what was fitting to each.

Arising in good time I went to my lord's house. Having washed my hands and feet, upon the threshold I approached my husband, with cupped hands.

Taking a comb, decorations, collyrium, and a mirror, I myself adorned my lord, like a servant-girl.

I myself prepared the rice-gruel. I myself washed the bowl. As a mother her only son, so I looked after my husband.

My husband offended against me, who in this way had shown him devotion, an affectionate servant, with humbled pride, an early riser, not lazy, virtuous.

He said this to his mother and father: "Having taken leave I shall go. I shall not be able to live together with Isidāsī in one house."

"Son, do not speak thus. Isidāsī is learned, clever, an early riser, not lazy. Son, why does she not please you?"

"She does me no harm, but I shall not live with Isidāsī; to me she is just odious. I have had enough; having taken leave, I shall go."

Hearing his utterance my father-in-law and mother-in-law asked me: "What offence has been committed by you? Speak confidently how it really was."

"I have not offended at all. I have not harmed him. I have not said any evil utterance. What can be done when my husband hates me?"

Downcast, overcome by suffering, they led me back to my father's house, saying: "While keeping our son safe, we have lost the goddess of beauty incarnate."

Then my father gave me to the household of a second rich man, belonging to a noble family, for half the bride-price for which the merchant had taken me.

In his house too I lived a month, then he too rejected me, although serving him like a slave-girl, not harming him, possessed of ethical discipline.

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And my father spoke to one wandering for alms, a tamer of others and self-tamed: "Be my son-in-law; throw down your cloth and pot."

He too, having lived with me for a fortnight, then said to my father: "Give me my cloth and pot and cup; I shall beg for alms again."

Then my father, mother, and all the group of my relatives said to him: "What has not been done for you here? Say quickly, what may be done for you."

Thus spoken to, he said: "Even if I myself were honoured, I have had enough; I shall not be able to live together with Isidāsī in one house."

Allowed to go, he departed. I for my part, all alone, thought: "Having asked leave, I shall go to die, or I shall go forth (as a nun)."

Then the noble lady Jinadattā, expert in the discipline, having great learning, possessed of ethical discipline, on her begging round, came to my father's house. ...

Having completely satisfied her with food and drink and hard food and what was stored there, I said: "Noble lady, I wish to go forth."

Then my father said to me: "Child, practise the Dhamma in this very place; with food and drink satisfy renunciants and twice-born brahmins."

Then I said to my father, lamenting, having cupped my hands: "Evil indeed was the action (of a past life) done by me. I shall destroy it"

Then my father said to me: "Attain awakening and the highest state, and obtain nirvana, which the best of humans realized."

Having saluted my mother and father, and all the group of my relatives, when I had gone forth for seven days I attained the three knowledges.

Isidāsī's verses: *Therīgāthā* 400–433, trans. G.A.S.

Great laymen and laywomen disciples

Can laypeople be *arahants*? *Th.226*

It is notable that even the foremost lay disciples are at most described as non-returners, and as celibate but not ordained. While it is seen as possible for a layperson to attain arahantship, it came to be held that their lay status would then have to be changed immediately.

Unequal (to arahantship), sire, are the attributes of a householder. The attributes being unequal, it is owing to the weakness of his attributes that a householder who has attained arahantship either goes forth (as a monastic) or attains final nirvana (at death) that very day. This is not a defect in arahantship, sire, this is a defect in the householder's attributes, namely their weakness. It is, sire, like the food that guards the life-span and protects the life of all beings, yet carries away the life of him whose stomach is out of order and has a sluggish and weak digestion, because it is not properly digested. This, sire, is not a defect in the food, this is a defect in the stomach, namely a weakness in its heat.

Milindapañha 265, trans. P.H.

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Th.227 Foremost laymen disciples and their qualities

Monks a male lay follower endowed with faith, rightly aspiring, should aspire thus: 'May I become like Citta the householder and Hatthaka of Āḷavī!' This is the standard and criterion for my laymen disciples, Citta the householder and Hatthaka of Āḷavī.

Āyācana-vagga 12, *sutta* 3: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.88, trans. P.H.

Monks, the foremost of my laymen disciples in being first to go for refuge are the merchants Tapussa and Bhallika. The foremost of my laymen disciples are: among donors, the householder Sudatta Anāthapiṇḍika; among speakers on Dhamma, the householder Citta of Macchikāsaṇḍa; among those who make use of the four means of drawing others together harmoniously and sustaining a retinue, Hatthaka of Āḷavī; among those who give what is excellent, Mahānāma the Sakyan; among those who give what is agreeable, the householder Ugga of Vesālī; among attendants of the Sangha, the householder Uggata; among those with unwavering confidence, Sūra Ambaṭṭha; among those with confidence in persons, Jīvaka Komārabhacca; among those who have trust, the householder Nakulapitā.

Etad-agga-vagga: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.26, trans. P.H.

Th.228 Citta the householder[670]

Citta, one of the two laymen disciples that the Buddha urged other laymen disciples to emulate, has a section of the Saṃyutta-nikāya *dedicated to him (S.IV.281–304). He is portrayed as often having deep discussions with monks, in which he asks probing questions on deep matters, or is asked such questions by monks. He was a non-returner (S.IV.301) who, on his death-bed, when gods urged him to become a Wheel-turning monarch in his next life, said he was beyond such impermanent things, and taught the gods to have firm confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha (S.IV.302–04). In the following passage, he is in conversation with Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, otherwise known as Mahāvīra, the leader of Jainism at the time of the Buddha.*

Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta then said to him, 'Householder, do you have faith in the renunciant Gotama when he says, "There is a meditative concentration without thought and examination, there is a cessation of thought and examination."' (Citta:) 'In this matter, venerable sir, I do not go by faith in the Blessed One'

When this was said, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta looked up proudly towards his own retinue and said, '... One who thinks that thought and examination can be stopped might imagine he could catch the wind in a net or arrest the current of the river Ganges in his own fist.'

(Citta:) 'What do you think, venerable sir, which is superior: knowledge or faith?' 'Knowledge, householder, is superior to faith.' 'Well, venerable sir, to whatever extent I wish, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I enter and dwell in the first meditative absorption, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with joy and easeful pleasure born of seclusion. Then, to whatever extent I wish, with the subsiding of thought and examination, I

670 See Nyanaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997, pp.365–372.

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enter and dwell in the second meditative absorption ... the third meditative absorption ... the fourth meditative absorption. Since I know and see this, venerable sir, in what other, renunciant or brahmin, need I place faith regarding the claim that there is a meditative concentration without thought and examination, a cessation of thought and examination?'

Nigaṇṭha Sutta: Saṃyutta-nikāya IV.298, trans. P.H.

Hatthaka of Āḷavī *Th.229*

Hatthaka, one of the two laymen disciples that the Buddha urged other lay disciples to emulate, 'could never get enough of seeing the Blessed One, hearing the good Dhamma and attending on the Sangha', being a non-returner who, when reborn in a heavenly realm, taught Dhamma to many gods (Aṅguttara-nikāya I 279).

On one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling at Āḷavī at the Aggāḷava shrine. Then Hatthaka of Āḷavī, accompanied by five hundred lay followers, approached the Blessed One, paid respect to him, and sat down to one side. The Blessed One then said, 'Your retinue is large, Hatthaka. How do you sustain this large retinue?'

'I do so, venerable sir, by the four means of drawing together harmoniously taught by the Blessed One. When I know, "This one is to be drawn by giving", I draw him by giving. When I know, "This one is to be drawn by endearing speech", I draw him by endearing speech. When I know, "This one is to be drawn by helpful conduct", I draw him by helpful conduct. When I know, "This one is to be drawn by impartiality", I draw him by impartiality. There is wealth in my family, venerable sir. They don't think they should listen to me as if I were poor.' 'Good, good, Hatthaka! This is the method by which you can sustain a large retinue'

... [After the Buddha taught Hatthaka Dhamma, and he had left] the Blessed One addressed the monks, 'Monks, you should remember Hatthaka of Āḷavī as one endowed with eight astounding and amazing qualities. What eight? He has faith; he has ethical discipline, and has sense of moral integrity and concern for consequences; he is learned, generous and wise; he has few desires (e.g. not wanting his inner good qualities known by others)....'

Hatthaka Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya IV.218–220, trans. P.H.

Foremost laywomen disciples and their qualities *Th.230*

Monks a female lay follower endowed with faith, rightly aspiring, should aspire thus: 'May I become like Khujjuttarā and Veḷukaṇṭakī (or Uttarā) Nandamātā!' This is the standard and criterion for my laywomen disciples, Khujjuttarā and Veḷukaṇṭakī Nandamātā.

Āyācana-vagga 12, *Sutta* 4: *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.88, trans. P.H.

Monks, the foremost of my laywomen disciples in being first to go for refuge is Sujātā, daughter of Senānī. The foremost of my laywomen disciples are: among donors, Visākhā Migāramātā; among those who are learned, Khujjuttarā; among those who dwell in loving kindness, Sāmāvatī; among those who practise meditative absorption, Uttarā

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Nandamātā; among those who give what is excellent, Suppavāsā the Koliyan daughter; among those who attend on the sick, the laywoman Suppiyā; among those of unwavering confidence, Kātiyānī; among those who are intimate (i.e. an intimate companion with her husband Nakulapitā), the housewife Nakulamātā; among those whose confidence is based on hearsay, the laywoman Kāḷī of Kuraraghara.

Etad-agga-vagga: Aṅguttara-nikāya I.26, trans. P.H.

Th.231 Khujjuttarā and Veḷukaṇṭakī Nandamātā

Of these two laywomen disciples praised by the Buddha, the first is said in the Itivuttaka *commentary to have been the person who heard, remembered, and passed on the discourses in this 124 page text, and the* Milindapañha *(pp.78–79) says she could remember some of her past lives. The second is one who is praised by Sāriputta for being one who converses with gods, one of which praises her for chanting the* Pārāyana, *a 23-page section of the* Sutta-nipāta. *She retained her equanimity when her son was wrongly arrested, then executed and when her dead husband appeared to her. She was completely faithful to her husband, even in thought. Her other 'astounding and amazing' qualities were that:*

Since I declared myself a lay follower, I don't recall ever intentionally transgressing any training rule (of ethics). ... For as much as I want, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, I enter and dwell in the first ... second ... third ... fourth meditative absorption Of the five lower fetters taught by the Blessed One, I do not see any that I have not abandoned (hence, she was a non-returner).

Nandamātā Sutta: Aṅguttara-nikāya IV.66–67, trans. P.H.

MAHĀYĀNA

Great monastic disciples

M.165 Kāśyapa understands the Buddha's wordless teaching and becomes his successor

This passage is a kind of foundation legend for the Chan/Zen school, as it traces its inspiration back to the disciple Kāśyapa (Pāli (Mahā-)Kassapa: see Th.155, 212 and 217) and his understanding of the Buddha's wordless teaching.

The Blessed One holds up a flower: Once, when the Blessed One was staying on Vultures' Peak, he held up a flower to show to those who were assembled there. Everyone was silent except for the Venerable Kāśyapa, who broke into a smile. The Blessed One said, 'I possess the treasury of the eye of the true Dharma, and the wondrous mind of nirvana, the true formless form, and the doorway into the subtle, wondrous Dharma, the unwritten teaching which is transmitted separately. I entrust this to Mahā-kāśyapa.'

'The Gateless Gate'/*Chan Zong Wumen Guan, Taishō* vol.48, text 2005, p.293c12–16, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

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Ānanda *M.166*

In this passage, Ānanda, the Buddha's attendant monk who also memorised his teachings, is given the task of passing on the perfection of wisdom teachings, which will continue the Buddha's presence in the world.

The Blessed One then said to the Venerable Ānanda, ... 'Ānanda, this is my instruction to you. In this perfection of wisdom, the knowledge of omniscience will be brought to perfection. What do you think, Ānanda, is the Tathāgata your teacher?' Ānanda said, 'He is my teacher, Blessed One. He is my teacher, Fortunate One.'

The Blessed One then said to the Venerable Ānanda, 'The Tathāgata is your teacher, Ānanda. You have taken care of me, Ānanda, with beautiful physical acts of loving kindness, beautiful words of loving kindness, and beautiful thoughts of loving kindness. Ānanda, you have looked after me, shown me affection and faith, and paid reverence to me now in this body. You should treat the perfection of wisdom in the same way when I am gone. A second time, Ānanda, and a third, I entrust this perfection of wisdom to you so that it is not lost. There is no-one better suited to this task. As long as this perfection of wisdom exists in the world, Ānanda, it can be said that the Tathāgata remains, and teaches the Dharma. Living beings, Ānanda, will still be able to see the Buddha, hear the Dharma, and be in the presence of the Sangha. Those living beings who hear this perfection of wisdom, remember it, recite it, study it, spread it, teach it, explain it, elucidate it, repeat it, write it down, and honour, revere, venerate, worship, adore, and pay homage to it with flowers, incense, scents, garlands, perfumes, sandalwood powder, robes, parasols, banners, bells, flags, strings of lamps, and many other kinds of offerings – they will be close to the Tathāgata, they will be in the sphere of the Tathāgata.'

This is what the Blessed One said. The bodhisattvas, the great beings, led by Maitreya, along with the Venerable Subhūti, the Venerable Śāriputra, the Venerable Ānanda, Śakra, the Chief of the Gods, and the entire world with its gods, human beings, demi-gods, garuḍas, and gandharvas rejoiced at the Blessed One's words.

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, ch.28 trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

Huineng becomes the sixth patriarch of Chan/Zen *M.167*

This passage gives the story of how Huineng (638–713), a young man of humble background, became the sixth patriarch of Chan Buddhism. While most people in the fifth patriarch's monastic community expected the head monk to become his successor, his understanding was not yet deep enough, as he still held that the mind needed to be purified. Huineng showed his deeper insight by seeing that in its Buddha-nature, the mind is already pure, and it is only limited thinking that blocks awareness of this. After he expressed this in a verse, the fifth patriarch recognized him as his successor, and urged him to leave the community lest any small-minded supporter of the head monk might harm him.

The great master spoke to the assembly. 'Spiritual friends, awakening is your own nature, primordially pure. You need only employ this mind and you will attain Buddhahood straight away. Spiritual friends, listen to me. Practise in this way and you will get to the meaning of the Dharma.

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My father was originally from Fàn Yáng, but he was banished to Lǐngnán and worked as a commoner in Xīn Prefecture. Unfortunately, he died young. My old mother was left alone, and we moved to Nán Hǎi where we suffered hardship and poverty. I sold firewood in the market, and one day a traveller bought some from me and asked me to deliver it to the inn where he was staying. I was happy to have earned some money. When I left I saw another traveller who was reciting a sūtra outside the door. I heard some of the words of the sūtra, and my mind opened into awakening. I asked the traveller what sūtra he was reciting, and he said, "The Diamond Sūtra[671]". I then asked him where he had come from, and where he had learned this sūtra.

He replied, "I have come from the Eastern Chan Temple in Huáng Méi County, in Qí Prefecture. The Fifth Patriarch, who is a great and patient master, is the abbot of this temple, and has more than a thousand disciples. I paid homage to him, listened to him, and received this sūtra. The master constantly urges both the monastic sangha and the laity to learn the Diamond Sūtra. If one does so, one will be able to see one's own nature directly, and attain Buddhahood."

I decided to leave for Huáng Méi to pay homage to the Fifth Patriarch. I made sure that my old mother had enough clothes and food, and a place to stay. I then bade her farewell, and after thirty days I arrived in Huáng Méi and paid homage to the Fifth Patriarch.

The Patriarch asked me, "Where are you from? What do you want?" I replied, "I am from Lǐngnán, a commoner from Xīn Prefecture. I have come a long way to pay homage to the master. My only desire is to attain Buddhahood. There is nothing else I desire."

The Patriarch said, "If you're from Lǐngnán then you're a barbarian. How can you attain Buddhahood?" I said, "Although someone may be from the south or from the north, their fundamental Buddha-nature is not from the south or the north. A barbarian and a Dharma teacher may be different in appearance, but what difference is there in their Buddha-nature?"

The Fifth Patriarch wanted to say more, but seeing that we were surrounded by his disciples, he instructed me to work with his disciples. I said, "Allow me to explain, teacher. Wisdom often arises in the mind of a disciple. This is nothing other than his own nature, which is a field of karmic benefit. In the end, if one examines the teacher's instructions, what work is there to be done?"

The Patriarch said, "This barbarian is very sharp. Do not say any more. Go to the threshing room." I retreated to the courtyard. A practitioner sent me to the threshing room, where I spent more than eight months working the foot pestle.

One day, the Patriarch suddenly said to me, "I think your insight could be useful to others, but I'm concerned that evil people might harm you. I will not, therefore, command you to speak. You may refuse to do so." I said, "The disciple understands what the master means. I do not dare to stand at the front of the hall, in case this may cause anyone to fail to attain awakening."

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671 The Diamond-cutter Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra* (*Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*): see M.4, 9, 20, 44, 48, 103.

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One day, the Patriarch asked all of his students to assemble. "Allow me to address you. For worldly people, saṃsāra is of vital importance. You lot spend all your time just trying to get karmic benefit for yourselves, and not trying to escape from saṃsāra, the ocean of suffering. If you are obsessed with karmic benefit, how can you be rescued? I want you each to go and look for wisdom. Get hold of your fundamental mind, which is the essence of wisdom. You are each to go and write a verse and present it to me. If any of you have realised the profound meaning, I will give you the robe and the Dharma, and make you the Sixth Patriarch. Hurry now – this is no time for laziness! Thinking about it isn't going to help you. Anyone who is able to gain insight into their own nature will do so as soon as they hear these words. If there is anyone here who is able to do this, they will be able to do it even sitting on top of a ring of knives."

The disciples withdrew. They said to each other, "There are a lot of us. We don't all need to purify our minds in order to compose a verse. What's the point of presenting a verse to the Patriarch? The Elder Shén Xiù is our teacher, he will certainly be able to manage it. Indeed, it would be disrespectful if we were to write our own verses. It would be a waste of effort." When the other disciples heard them speaking in this way, they were relieved. They all said, "We already rely on Shén Xiù as our teacher. Why go to the trouble of writing our own verses?"

'Shén Xiù reflected, "None of those who look to me as their teacher are going to present a verse. I must write a verse to present to the Patriarch. If I do not present a verse, how will the Patriarch know whether my insight is profound or shallow? If I present a verse with the intention of seeking the Dharma, this is wholesome. However, if I do so with the intention of becoming the next Patriarch, this is unwholesome. That would be like an ordinary person seeking to usurp a sacred office. On the other hand, if I don't present a verse, I won't be able to obtain the Dharma. How difficult! How difficult!"

In front of the Fifth Patriarch's hall, there was a corridor with three sections. He had commissioned the artist Lú Zhēn to paint images from the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra,[672] and the lineage of the Fifth Patriarch, which would be of benefit to future generations. When Shén Xiù had successfully composed his verse, he made several attempts to go to the hall to present it. But each time, his mind would suddenly become confused, he would break out in a sweat all over his body, and not be able to do it. He tried again after four days, and again, he couldn't do it. After thirteen attempts, he thought, "Perhaps it would be best to write the verse in the corridor for the Patriarch to read. If he says that it is in accordance with the path, I will come forward, pay homage, and say, 'This is the work of Shén Xiù'. If he says that it is not, then the years I have spent in the mountains will have been in vain. I will have accepted homage, but what path will I have been practising?"

In the third watch of the night, at around midnight, he took a lamp and went in secret to write his verse on the wall of one of the sections of the corridor, to present the insight he had gained. His verse was as follows:

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672 A text emphasizing the Buddha-nature and the way in which the perceived world is shaped by one's mind: see M.142.

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The body is the Bodhi-tree.
The mind is like a stand for a clear mirror.
We must polish it constantly,
never allowing the dust to gather.

When Shén Xiù had written his verse, he returned to his room. No-one knew what he had done. He reflected, "If the Fifth Patriarch is happy when he sees my verse tomorrow, then I will be able to give the Dharma to others. If he says that it is not good, that will mean I am overwhelmed by the effects of my previous unwholesome actions, and that I will not be able to realise the Dharma. The profound truth is difficult to fathom." In his room he reflected restlessly in this way, and was not able to sit or lie down in peace.

In the early morning, the Patriarch saw that Shén Xiù had not entered the door of the Dharma, and that he had not yet attained realisation and insight into his own nature. At dawn he summoned Lú Zhēn. "I have commissioned you to paint some scenes in the corridor outside the southern hall. Now, however, I see this verse written there. It should be left there, so there is no need for your paintings. I am sorry you have come so far for nothing. In the Diamond Sūtra it says, 'All appearances are illusory'. Let us leave this verse here and have people learn and recite it. Those who rely upon this verse will not fall into states of misfortune. It will be of great benefit to them." He had his disciples burn incense in front of the verse, and pay homage to it. He said, "If you recite this verse constantly, you will gain insight into your own nature." The disciples recited the verse, and all exclaimed, "Excellent!"

In the third watch of the night, at around midnight, the Patriarch asked Shén Xiù to come to the hall and asked him, "Is this verse your work or not?" Shén Xiù replied, "Indeed it is, but I do not dare to request the robe and the office of the Patriarch. I would ask you to show compassion for your disciple, and tell me whether or not I have attained some small measure of wisdom."

The Patriarch replied, "You have not attained insight into your fundamental nature. You have reached the door, but you have not passed through it. If people seek unsurpassed awakening by following your verse, they will not attain it. To attain unsurpassed awakening, you must understand your fundamental mind, and see that your fundamental nature is unarisen and unceasing. You should bear this view in mind at all times. The great countless mass of phenomena is unobstructed. Each one is real, and all are real. The great countless mass of worlds are as they are, and the mind – as it is – is reality. Seeing things in this way is the nature of unsurpassed perfect awakening. Go and reflect on this for a day or two and compose another verse. I will read your verse, and if you have passed through the door, then I will give you the robe and the Dharma." Shén Xiù paid homage and left. After several days had passed, he was still not able to compose a new verse. His mind was confused, and his thoughts were restless. Whether walking or sitting, he was not able to find contentment.

A couple of days later, one of the disciples passed by the threshing room reciting the verse (of Shén Xiù). As soon as I heard it, I knew that whoever had composed it had not attained insight into their fundamental nature and that, whilst they were not ignorant of the teach-

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ings, they had not yet understood the profound meaning. I asked this disciple, "What's that verse you're reciting?".

He replied, "Don't you know, barbarian? The Master has said that for worldly people, saṃsāra is of vital importance, and that anyone who wishes to receive the transmission of the robe and the Dharma is to write a verse. If there is anyone who has realised the profound meaning, then they will receive the robe and the Dharma and become the Sixth Patriarch. The Elder Shén Xiù wrote a verse on freedom from characteristics on the wall of the southern corridor, and the Master had everyone recite it. By practising the teaching contained in this verse, one will avoid falling into states of misfortune, and it will bring one great benefit."

I said, "I would also like to recite this verse, to ensure that I have the necessary conditions for attaining a good rebirth. I have been working the foot pestle, and I have not yet been to the hall. Would you be so kind as to show me this verse, so that I can pay homage to it?" He showed me where it was, and I said, "I cannot read. Would you read it aloud for me?" At that time, Rìyòng Zhāng, an official from Jiāng Prefecture happened to be there, and he read the verse aloud. When I had listened to it, I said, "I too have a verse. Would you be so kind as to write it on the wall for me?" The official said, "You have composed a verse as well? How odd."

I said to the official, "If you want to train yourself in unsurpassed perfect awakening, you should not make light of those who are beginning their training. The lowest of people can possess the highest wisdom, and the highest of people may have no understanding whatsoever. Making light of others is boundlessly, immeasurably unwholesome."

The official said, "Recite your verse and I'll write it on the wall for you. But if you attain the Dharma, you have to teach me first. Don't forget that!" I then recited my verse:

Bodhi fundamentally has no tree
and the clear mirror has no stand.
Fundamentally, nothing comes into being.
Where can dust gather?

When the official had written this verse on the wall, all the disciples were shocked, and gasped in amazement. They all said to each other, "Incredible! You can't judge people on their appearance. All this time, he was a living bodhisattva!"

When the Patriarch saw everyone's amazement he was afraid that they would do me harm, so he rubbed out the verse with his shoe and said, "This person has not attained insight into their nature either." Everyone accepted this.

The next day the Patriarch came to the threshing room in secret and saw me pounding rice with a rock at my waist. He said, "Someone who seeks the path would even give up their body for the Dharma. Are you this kind of person?" He then asked, "Is the rice ripe or not?" I replied, "The rice has been ripe for a long time. It just needs to be sifted." The Patriarch struck the pestle three times with his staff, and left. I understood that this was a signal that I was to go and see him in the third watch of the night, at midnight.

The Patriarch kept his outer robe hidden away where no-one could

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see it. He explained the Diamond Sūtra to me, and when he got to "a bodhisattva should cultivate a mind which is not based on anything at all", I attained great awakening, and realised that the great countless mass of phenomena are not separate from my own nature.

I revealed my awakening to the Patriarch by saying, "One's own nature is always fundamentally and naturally pure. One's own nature is always fundamentally and naturally unarisen and unceasing. One's own nature is always fundamentally and naturally complete. One's own nature is always fundamentally and naturally unmoving. The great countless mass of phenomena can always arise from one's own nature."

The Patriarch then knew that I had realised my own fundamental nature, and said to me, "If you do not know your fundamental mind, there is no point in training yourself in the Dharma. If you know your own fundamental mind, then you will gain insight into your fundamental nature. This is what it means to be a teacher of gods and human beings, a Buddha."

In the third watch of the night, I received the Dharma without anyone else's knowledge. The Patriarch passed on the sudden teaching to me, as well as the robe and bowl. "You are now the Sixth Patriarch. Maintain your mindfulness, and spread the teaching widely. Do not allow the transmission to be broken. Listen to this verse:

Living beings sow seeds,
and because there is earth, fruit arises.
Inanimate objects have no seeds,
no nature, and no arising."

The Patriarch continued, "When the great master Bodhidharma[673] first came here, people did not have faith, so he passed on this robe as an embodiment of faith. It has been passed on from master to disciple. The Dharma is transmitted from mind to mind. The mind must always attain its own realisation, its own liberation. From ancient times, the buddhas have only passed on the fundamental essence, whilst the masters have secretly transmitted the fundamental mind. The robe has become a source of conflict, and you should not pass it on. If you do, your life will hang by a thread. Go quickly! I am afraid that someone will harm you."

I replied, "Where should I go?" The Patriarch said, "When you encounter cherishing, you should stop. When you come across a group of people, you should hide."

In the third watch of the night, I received the robe and bowl and said, "I am originally from the south, I do not know these mountain roads. How do I get to the mouth of the river?" The Fifth Patriarch said, "Do not worry. I will accompany you." The Patriarch accompanied me as far as the ninth post-house on the river, where we got into a boat. The Fifth Patriarch took the oars and began to row. I said, "Please, Teacher, come over here. The disciple should do the rowing." The Patriarch said, "I should take you over to the other side."

I said, "When your mind is confused, you believe that the teacher takes you over to the other side.[674] When you have attained realisa-

673 The legendary master who first brought Chan/Zen to China.

674 Crossing over to the 'other side' or 'other shore' is a classic Buddhist image for attaining awakening.

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tion, you see that you take yourself across. The words 'take across' are used in different ways. I was born in a faraway place, and my pronunciation is not correct. I have received the Dharma from you, Master, and attained realisation. My own nature itself has been taken across."

The Patriarch said, "Exactly. Exactly. In the future, the Buddha-Dharma will spread widely because of you. Three years after your departure, I will pass away. You should go now. Try your best to go south. Don't be in a hurry to start teaching. It is difficult to establish the Buddha-Dharma."

I took my leave of the Patriarch, and headed south.'

'Platform *Sūtra* of the Sixth Patriarch'/*Liuzi-tan jing*, *Taishō* vol.48, text 2008, pp.347c28–349b14, trans. from Chinese by D.S.

Great lay disciples

The lay *bodhisattva* Vimalakīrti *M.168*

This passage describes a famous lay bodhisattva *(as e.g. in M.10, 113, 127, 136, 141) who is portrayed as wiser than many eminent monks, and who lives in the world without attachment to it, in order to guide all (including encouraging people to ordain as monks* or nuns*). An example of great female lay disciple is Queen Śrīmāla, as in passage M.33.*

At that time, there was a Licchavi by the name of Vimalakīrti living in the great city of Vaiśālī. He had served the Victorious Ones of the past, cultivated wholesome roots, and paid reverence to many Buddhas. He had attained patient acceptance (of challenging realities and teachings), and easily mastered the great higher knowledges. He had mastered the dhāraṇīs[675] and achieved complete self-confidence. He had defeated his opponent, Māra, and entered into the profound Dharma. The perfection of wisdom had arisen in him, and he was adept at applying skill in means. He possessed great eloquence, and skilfully understood the attitudes and the behaviour of living beings. He understood the kinds of faculties they possessed, and taught them the Dharma according to their abilities. He applied himself with determination and great effort. He had thoroughly investigated the Mahāyāna, and was accomplished in it. He conducted himself like a Buddha, and his outstanding intellect was like the ocean (in its depth and vastness). The Buddhas all sang his praises, and he was honoured by Indra, Brahmā, and all of the protectors of the world. In order to bring living beings to maturity through his skill in means, he dwelt in the great city of Vaiśālī.

He possessed limitless riches, so that he could attract poor living beings who had no-one to protect them. His ethical discipline was completely pure, so that he could attract those of bad conduct. He had attained patience and self-control, so that he could attract corrupt, wicked, wretched beings whose minds were filled with anger. He was iridescent with vigour, so that he could attract lethargic beings. His meditation, mindfulness, and meditative concentration were firm, so

675 Powerful formulas or incantations, similar to mantras.

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that he could attract scatter-brained beings. His wisdom was firmly established, so that he could attract beings who lacked wisdom.

He wore pure white clothes,[676] but he conducted himself like a perfect renunciant. He dwelt in a house, but was not involved with the realm of sensual desire, the realm of pure form, or the formless realm. He appeared to have wives and sons, but he always maintained celibacy. He appeared to be surrounded by an entourage, but he always maintained a life of seclusion. He appeared to be adorned with jewellery, but he always possessed the bodily marks of a Buddha. He appeared to live a life of indulgence in eating and drinking, but he always obtained his nourishment from meditation. He appeared to be greatly fond of gambling at all the gambling-houses, but he always practised vigilance, and worked to bring living beings to maturity. He kept company with non-Buddhists, but in his intentions he was never separated from the Buddha. He was learned in the worldly and transcendental scriptures of the non-Buddhists, but always delighted in the pleasures of the Dharma. He was part of society in every way, but received the highest forms of worship wherever he went.

He kept company with the elderly, the middle-aged, and the young, in order to conform to worldly life, but he always spoke in accordance with the Dharma. He was involved in all kinds of trade and commerce, but he had no interest in profit or gain. He would appear at every crossroads and on every street corner in order to encourage good conduct amongst all living beings, and he involved himself in the affairs of state in order to protect them. He appeared amongst all the people who taught and listened to the Dharma, so that they might sever their ties to the Lesser Vehicle,[677] and commit themselves to the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna). He visited all the schools, in order to bring the children to maturity. He went to all the brothels, in order to demonstrate the harmful effects of sensual desire. He went to all the ale-houses, in order to help the people there to apply mindfulness and clear comprehension. He was accepted as a merchant by merchants because he proclaimed the supreme Dharma.[678] He was accepted as a householder by householders because he remained aloof from attachment and grasping. He was accepted as a warrior by warriors because his patient acceptance, gentleness and power were firmly established. ...

In this way, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, who possessed vigilance, skill in means, and knowledge, lived in the great city of Vaiśālī.

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, ch.2, sections 1–6, trans. from Sanskrit by D.S.

676 Indicative of the status of a householder, a lay-person.

677 *Hīnayāna*: of those who aim only for their own liberation.

678 There is a play on words here which is lost in translation, in that the word for 'merchant', *śreṣṭhi*, is almost identical to the word for the word for 'supreme', *śreṣṭha*. There is thus only one letter separating 'the supreme Dharma', which is what Vimalakīrti actually teaches, from 'the Dharma of merchants'.

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VAJRĀYĀNA
The great accomplished ones

The six passages below are mostly selected from 'Lives of the Eighty-four Mahāsiddhas*', a collection of life stories illustrating the practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism. These eighty-four 'great accomplished ones' lived in India between the eighth and twelfth centuries. Leading unconventional lives, they were remarkable men and women who attained the accomplishments* (siddhi) *of both supernormal powers and the supramundane state of awakening by disregarding convention and penetrating to the core of reality. Every one of them gained their accomplishments in their own unique way, turning their individual lives into the path to awakening. The final story concerns Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), spiritual founder of the Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism.*

The Life of Guru Lūyipa *V.86*

This Mahāsiddha *is noted for overcoming his pride in his royal background.*

Lūyipa received his name because he fed on fish-guts. This is how the story goes: There was a king of Sri Lanka, whose power was equal to that of Vaiśravaṇa, the Wealthy Emperor of the Northern Continent. His royal palace was decorated all over with jewels, pearls, gold, silver, and other precious material. He had three sons. A while after he died, astrologers were asked which one of the princes was to inherit the kingdom. They made their calculations and said: 'If the middle prince ascends to power, the kingdom will be strong, the people happy, and there will be many other benefits.' So, the father's dominion was given over to the middle prince. He was enthroned into royal power by his two brothers and the whole people, but he did not want to be king[679] and attempted escape. His two brothers and subjects caught him and bound him in golden chains. The prince gave all his attendants and prison-guards tokens of gold and silver to let him go free. At night, he donned patched garments and escaped from the palace. He found an escort, bribed him with gold, and journeyed to Rāmeśvaram, King Rāmala's country. Having abandoned his seat of silk brocade, he laid out an antelope-skin[680] to sit on; having given up his royal throne, now he slept in ashes.[681]

The prince was so pleasingly shaped and good-looking that he was constantly provided with alms, so he never had to go without food or drink. Later he went to the Vajrāsana (Diamond seat), where the Buddha Śākyamuni had attained awakening, and was given kind welcome there by a sky-dancer (*ḍākinī*),[682] who gave him instructions. From there he went to the royal capital, Pātaliputra, and stayed there, subsisting

679 Given the luxury and violence often associated with kingship, Buddhism has a number of stories about good princes seeking to avoid becoming king; a complementary theme is that of how to be a good, just king.

680 As used by yogis and ascetics.

681 That is, he adopted the life-style of a tantric yogi.

682 *Ḍākinī*s, manifestations of wisdom (see first footnote to V.4.) were thought to have the power of giving esoteric instruction.

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on the food he was given by the people and sleeping in the charnel ground. One day he went to the market and arrived at the place where the women sold liquor. The chief women among the liquor-sellers – who was a worldly *ḍākinī* – looked at the young man and said: 'This one has purified his four *cakras*[683] of almost all defilements, except there is a pea-sized impurity of royal consciousness left in his heart.' Then she poured some putrid food into a clay pot and gave it to him. When the prince threw it out, the *ḍākinī* got angry and told him: 'If you still have conceptions of good food and bad food, then what have you got to do with the Dharma?'

This made the prince understand that his preconceptions were obstacles to awakening, so he got rid of them. He picked up the thrown-out entrails of the fish that the fishermen caught in the Ganges, and ate them. He did his practice for twelve years. All the fishwives could see that he was feeding on fish-guts, so they called him Lūyipa, the Fish-gut Eater. That is how he became known far and wide.

'Lives of the Eighty-four *Mahāsiddhas*', ff.2–5, trans. T.A.

V.87 The Life of Guru Kankaripa

This mahāsiddha *is noted for having overcome attachment to his dead wife.*

In the country of Magadha there once lived a householder of low caste. He married a girl of his own social class. Continuously relishing the taste of domestic pleasures, he cared only for the affairs of this world without giving a single thought to the virtuous Dharma, the path of liberation. He lived happily but then, unexpectedly, his wife's (life-sustaining) karma got exhausted and she died. He carried her corpse to the charnel ground but, unable to let go of it, he stayed there beside the corpse, weeping.

Suddenly a highly realized yogi appeared next to him and asked him, 'What are you doing here in this charnel ground?' The householder said. 'Can't you see, yogi, the wretched state I am in? I feel like a blind man whose eyes have been torn out. Deprived of my beloved, my happiness has come to an end. Is there anyone in this world more miserable than me?' The yogi told him, 'All life ends in death; every meeting ends in separation; all conditioned things are impermanent. Since everybody who wanders in saṃsāra suffers, do not grieve over the painful nature of cyclic existence! What use is guarding a corpse which is just like a lump of clay? You had better mind the Dharma and get rid of all suffering.'

'Yogi, if there is a way to get free from the suffering of birth and death in saṃsāra, please let me know', the householder implored. The yogi said, 'The way of liberation lies in the guru's instruction.' The householder asked, 'Then please give it to me.' Thereupon the yogi gave him empowerment[684] as well as instruction on the Self-less Sphere.

'How shall I meditate?' the householder asked. The yogi said, 'Abandon thoughts of your deceased wife, and meditate on the Self-less

683 Energy-centres in the subtle body situated at four spots along the spine: the navel, the heart, the throat, and the forehead.

684 Or initiation.

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Lady[685] as bliss and emptiness indivisible.' With these words, he set him to meditation.

In six years, the conception of his ordinary wife faded into the sphere of emptiness and bliss. His mental defilements cleared away and he gained experiential realization of total bliss, the luminous nature of the mind. Just as delusory visions dissolve when the poison datura clears out from the system, as he cleared out ignorance, the poison of delusion, he beheld the actuality of undistorted truth and obtained accomplishment. He became known far and wide under the name 'Kankaripa Yogi'. Having taught the Dharma to many beings in his homeland, Magadha, he went into the sky[686] in that very body.

'Lives of the Eighty-four *Mahāsiddhas*', ff. 34–36, trans. T.A.

The Life of Guru Vīṇāpa *V.88*

This mahāsiddha *is noted for transmuting his love of lute-playing into a meditation on sound.*

The name Vīṇāpa means 'Lute-player.'[687] His homeland was Ghahuri, his caste the royal caste, his guru Buddhapa, and he gained accomplishment from the practice of Hevajra.[688]

His story is this: The king of Ghahuri had only one son, who was very dear to his parents and the people. He was brought up under the care of eight nannies and others. The prince would always stay together with the court-musicians who served as his bodyguards. He learned to play the lute so well that his mind was totally absorbed in the sound of the *tamboura*[689] as he was plucking the lute – so much so that he forgot about everything else in the world. His royal parents, the ministers, and the people started to say bad things about him: 'This prince has been brought up to be heir to his royal father, but he is so much attached to the sound of the lute that he does not perform the duties of a regent. What should we do?'

They asked a well-trained yogi named Buddhapa to visit him. As the prince saw him, he immediately trusted him. Having prostrated to him and circumambulated him, they engaged in straightforward conversation. After the yogi had spent some time with the prince, he saw that it was an appropriate time to train him, so he asked him: 'Prince, don't you practise the Dharma?' The prince said, 'Yes, yogi, I do practise the Dharma; (but) I cannot live without the sweet sound of the *tamboura*. If there is a way to practise the Dharma without giving it up, then I will practise it.' 'If you have faith and perseverance in practising the Dharma, then I will give you personal instruction and teach you how to practise it without giving up playing the *vīṇā*', the yogi told him. 'Please give it to me', he said.

Thereupon the yogi gave him empowerment to ripen his immature mind-stream, and gave him the following meditation instruction: 'For-

685 The Self-less Lady is *Nairātmyā*, the consort of Heruka, the tantric deity into whose practice Kankaripa must have been initiated.

686 Here meaning the 'expanse of phenomena', or a Buddha-land.

687 Or player of the *vīṇā*: a lute-like Indian instrument with a sweet sound.

688 A tantric deity.

689 Another stringed instrument used for accompanying the *vīṇā*.

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get the idea of listening to the sound of the *tamboura* with your ears; mix the mental impression with the concept of the sound, and meditate on that!'

Having meditated in that way for nine years, the prince cleared away his mental defilements and gained experience of the mind's lamp-like luminosity. He developed various kinds of higher knowledge and many other good qualities. He became known far and wide as 'Viṇāpa Yogi'. He gave immeasurable teachings to the citizens of Ghahuri. Finally, having given an account of his realization, he passed into the sky in that very body.

'Lives of the Eighty-four *Mahāsiddhas*', ff.50–53, trans. T.A.

V.89 The Life of Guru Maṇibhadrā or the Yoginī Bhahuri

This mahāsiddha *is noted as a wise girl, who was strongly impressed by impermanence.*

In a town called Agarce, there was a wealthy householder with a thirteen year-old daughter. He gave her as a bride to a man of his own caste.[690] The girl went back to her parents' place and while she was there, Guru Kukkuripa arrived. He asked the girl to give him some food, and she told him: 'Why does a man with such a perfect physical appearance like you live on alms and wear patched clothes? Surely you could take a suitable wife from your own caste.'

The guru said, 'Scared and frightened by saṃsāra, I seek the supreme happiness of liberation. If I do not achieve it in this good physical basis, how could I find one like this again? Therefore, if I were to conceal the precious gem of this wonderful base in an unclean marriage partner, its purpose would be defeated and a lot of suffering would follow. Having understood this, I have abandoned the idea of marriage.'

Believing him, she brought him some excellent food and asked him to show her a method to obtain liberation. He told her that his home was the charnel ground and she would have to go there if she needed instruction. Forgetting all her duties, she fled at night and went there. The guru noticed that the girl's mind-stream was ripe and initiated her into Cakrasaṃvara, the personification of Highest Bliss. He gave her instruction on the generation and completion stages unified, and she stayed there to practise for seven days.

Then she went back to her parents, who beat her and scolded her badly. She told them: 'In all the three realms there is nobody who has not been my father and mother (in some past life). Yet not even a great family line can save me from the depths of saṃsāra. That is why I have attended a guru. Since I am working for liberation, you can hit me and I will take that onto the path.' Her parents thought it was a whim and did not say anything. So she went on practising the guru's instructions while neglecting all her work and duties.

Having waited for a year, her husband came for her and took her with him. She went to his house and performed all her mundane work and duties as she was supposed to. She served her husband both physically and verbally, speaking to him pleasantly, and so forth. As it happens,

690 By the time of the *mahāsiddhas*, the Hindu idea of caste had pervaded Indian society, and affected even those affiliated to Buddhism to varying extents.

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she gave birth first to a son and then to a daughter who looked just like her parents, and they all lived happily.

Twelve years passed since she had met with the guru. Then one day, as she was on the way home fetching water from the well, she tripped over a piece of wood and broke the water-pitcher. She stayed there in absorption. When she did not return home for half a day, her family went to look for her. They found her sitting there looking at the broken pitcher, and whatever they told her she did not seem to hear. Everybody thought she was possessed by a demon. Then, as the sun was just about to set, she exclaimed: 'Sentient beings without beginning always break their body-pitchers, so why do they return home? Today I have broken my pitcher and I am not going to return to my home of saṃsāra; I am going to Great Bliss instead! How wonderful and amazing; if you want happiness, attend to the guru!'

With these words, she rose into the air and stayed there for twenty-one days, giving instructions to his country people in Agarce. Then she went into the sky.

'Lives of the Eighty-four *Mahāsiddhas*', ff.252–56, trans. T.A.

The Life of Guru Lakṣmīnkarā *V.90*

This mahāsiddha *is noted as a princess who is disgusted by hunting, who advised a king to listen to the wise words of her (low-caste) sweeper.*

Lakṣmīnkarā was the sister of King Indrabhūti who ruled over the 250,000 citizens of a township called Sambholnagara in the land of Oḍḍiyāna.[691] From an early age, she had many good qualities of the awakened family.[692] Moreover, she heard a lot of Dharma from the Mahāsiddha Vāvapa, among others, and was knowledgeable in several tantras. She was asked to marry Sambhol – the son of Jalendra, King of Laṅkāpurī – and her brother King Indrabhūti gave her to him. When the delegation came for her, she set out to Laṅkāpurī with a retinue of Dharma-scholars and bestowed with inexhaustible riches.

On arrival they were told there was a bad constellation, and were not admitted into the capital. As they were waiting, the Lady observed the people and seeing they were all non-Buddhist, she became sad. Then the prince's retinue passed by returning from a hunt and carrying a lot of meat. The Lady asked them who they were, where they were coming from, and why they had killed those animals. 'We are just coming from a hunt. We were dispatched by your royal fiancé to kill some wild animals', they replied. Feeling totally disgusted, she thought to herself, 'My brother is a king who protects the Dharma. How could he give me to such a heathen?' And she fainted on the spot.

When she regained her senses, she gave her riches to the citizens, and having bestowed her jewellery upon her attendants, she sent them back home. Then she locked herself into a room and allowed no-one to see her for ten days. She smeared her body with oil and charcoal, cut her hair, and stripped herself naked. Though she feigned lunacy, she never

691 Oḍḍiyāna was a semi-mythic country somewhere in northwest India, purportedly the homeland of many tantric teachings.

692 This shows that she had already awakened to Buddha-nature in a past life.

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actually wavered from the essential reality.[693] The king and his people were overwhelmed by sorrow. They sent some doctors to prepare medicine and try to cure her, but she furiously attacked everyone who went there. They sent an envoy to her brother but he remained calm; he could guess that his sister had just got disgusted with saṃsāra.

From that time on, the Lady was acting mad. She ate the leftovers of the people of Laṅkāpurī, slept on the charnel ground, and practised the essential Dharma. In seven years, she attained accomplishment.[694] She was rendered faithful service by one of the king's sweepers. She gave him instruction, and he attained some spiritual qualities which remained unknown to others.

Then one day King Jalendra went for a hunt with his retinue, and it got very late. The king took a rest right where he was, and when he came back, he strayed on the wrong path. Unable to return home, he was looking for shelter when he stumbled upon the cave where Lakṣmīnkarā was sleeping. Curious to find out what the crazy woman was doing, he looked inside and saw her staying there with light radiating from her body, surrounded on all sides by countless divine maidens making offerings. Overcome by true faith, he stayed there for the night and then returned home. Later he went back and paid her homage.

'Why are you paying homage to a woman like me?' asked the Lady. 'Because you have great spiritual qualities and I am asking for instruction', the king replied, and she told him: 'All sentient beings are just suffering in saṃsāra; none of them is ever truly happy. Even the highest beings, gods and humans are tormented by the pains of birth, ageing, sickness, and death. The three lower realms are nothing but suffering; there is immeasurable pain from heat and cold, constant hunger, and beings eating each other. Therefore, King, seek the great bliss of liberation!'

Finally, she told him: 'You are not going to be tamed by me. One of your sweepers, however, became my student and gained accomplishment. He will be your spiritual friend.' He said, 'There are many of them, so how can I recognize him?' 'He is the one who gives food to beings after he finishes sweeping, so look for him at night', she said.

The king went out to look for the right sweeper, and when he saw one acting the way the Lady described, he invited him into his palace. He seated him on the throne, prostrated to him, and asked for instruction. The sweeper gave him initiation conferring the guru's blessing, and taught him both the generation and completion stages of the practice of Vajravārāhi.

To conclude, the sweeper and the Lady demonstrated miracles in Laṅkāpurī, and went to the sky in those very bodies.

'Lives of the Eighty-four *Mahāsiddhas*', ff.305–11, trans. T.A.

V.91 Song of the mystical experiences of Lama Tsongkhapa

The following is an account of the extraordinary spiritual experiences in the life of Lama Tsongkhapa (1357–1419 – see VI.5 and V.40), spiritual founder of the Gelukpa order of Tibetan Buddhism, written in the form of a versified eulogy.

693 That is, all the while she maintained pure awareness.
694 Here meaning awakening.

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In particular, it contains a list of Buddhas and bodhisattvas — both historical and archetypical (celestial)[695] *— whom Tsongkhapa reportedly saw and met personally.*

Homage to the Dharma King Tsongkhapa!

O sun-like Prince of the Victorious One with ray-lights of knowledge in the vast sky of wisdom that sees all the varieties of phenomena just as they are; O Venerable Lord of Dharma, Glorious Guru, I revere the dust of your feet with the crown of my head.

Although the good qualities of your body, speech and mind could not be expressed fully by even the Buddhas and their sons who reside in the ten directions, listen for a while to my faithful composition!

May the wise find delight in this nicely arranged garland of eulogy I have composed in praise of your oceanic good qualities; a neck-ornament for the clear-minded, a jewel to increase the karmic benefit of the faithful.

A cloud of karmic benefit from the good actions you have performed, a continuous rainfall nourishing the virtuous goodness of your disciples, a roaring thunder proclaiming the profound and vast Dharma; O Glorious Guru, you are like a mighty storm!

Lord of yogis, greatest of all tantric masters, who have mastered many millions of meditative absorptions, composed lucid expositions, and made real effort at practising the Dharma; Glorious Guru, you tower over the heads of all beings.

Offering a precious rosary of one hundred and one crystal beads to the Victorious One at Vajrāsana[696] in a former lifetime, you have aroused the awakening-mind, which made you fortunate enough to understand the right view; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

From the age of seven, when you first saw Vajrapāṇi, Lord of the Secret, as well as the glorious Dīpaṁkara of the Great Chariot[697], face to face, and were taken under their care, the tantras and sūtras dawned on you as personal instructions; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

O Jetsun[698], Lord of Dharma, you directly perceived Mañjughoṣa[699] in the centre of a globular halo of five brilliant light-rays as blue as the colour of a perfect sapphire; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

From that time onward, O Lord of Dharma, whenever you wished, you could meet the Venerable Jewel of Wisdom and listen to his profound teachings on the glorious Secret Assembly[700] and the Perfection of Wisdom; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

When practising the seven-limbed ritual,[701] O Lord of Dharma, you

695 The celestial ones being: Vajrapāṇi, Maitreya, Amitābha, Tārā, Uṣṇīṣa Vijayā, Uṣṇīṣa Sitatapatra, Yamāntaka, Mañjuśrī/Mañjughoṣa, Kālacakra.

696 The Diamond Throne in Bodhgayā, India, where the Buddha attained enlightenment.

697 Atiśa (see VI.5 and V.10), foremost proponent of the Mahāyāna sūtra tradition in Tibet.

698 Tibetan honorific used for a spiritually highly developed person.

699 A form of Mañjuśrī, bodhisattva of the wisdom of emptiness.

700 The *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, main text of the father class of *Anuttarayoga* tantras.

701 A practice of purification consisting of making prostrations, offerings, confession of bad actions and downfalls, rejoicing at virtuous actions, requesting the Buddhas to teach and remain in the world, and dedication of virtue made in front of the thirty-five Buddhas described in the 'Sūtra of the Three Dharma-collections' (*Tri-skandha-dharma Sūtra*).

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continuously beheld the true bodily forms, mudras[702], and other features of each of the thirty-five purification Buddhas; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

With both hands in the Dharma-teaching mudra, seated in an elegant posture, the guardian Maitreya prophesied that one day you would return possessing the ten powers of a Buddha and perform the acts of a victorious one; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

Lord of Dharma, Prince of the Victorious One, in direct perception you beheld the Śākya King,[703] teacher of men and gods, and the supreme healer and guide Amitābha radiant in the midst of their oceanic retinues; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

You clearly beheld Noble Tārā, the source of accomplishments, Uṣṇīṣa Vijayā, the supreme and radiant, Uṣṇīṣa Sitatapatra, the dispeller of all obstacles, and the other female Buddhas again and again; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

You were personally visited and continually assisted by the bodhisattva Nāgārjuna and his spiritual son Āryadeva, the noble Buddhapālita, the glorious Candrakīrti[704], as well as by the mighty yogi Nāgabodhi; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

You were personally visited and continually assisted by Asaṅga, who had attained to the third bodhisattva level; Vasubandhu, a second Omniscient One; and Dignāga,[705] who was protected by the Noble One; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

You were personally visited and continually assisted by Dharmakīrti, the moon of the teaching, as well as Guṇaprabha, the bodhisattvas Śākyaprabha, Śāntideva and the glorious Abhaya;[706] O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

You were personally visited and continually assisted by the great Indian mahāsiddhas,[707] such as Indrabhūti, the glorious Saraha, Lūyipa, Ghaṇṭapāda. Kāṣṇacārya, and Kamalaśīla, O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

Great bodhisattva who spontaneously accomplishes others' well-being, Mañjughoṣa clearly stated that, relying upon these lineages, there are auspicious conditions for vast accomplishments for yourself and others; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

When your yogic absorption combining calm abiding and special insight increased like the waxing moon, you beheld the excellent form of the blessed Yamāntaka[708] with faces and hands all complete; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

As the Guru's heart was touched by Mañjuśrī's wisdom sword, a stream of undefiled ambrosia entered your heart-centre and gave birth

702 Symbolic hand-gestures.

703 Śākyamuni Buddha.

704 Foremost Indian philosophers of the Madhyamaka school.

705 Greatest Indian philosophers of the 'Mind-only' (Cittamātra) or Yogācāra school.

706 Other important Indian masters who have composed commentaries on the works of the great philosophers.

707 'Great accomplished ones' of the Tantric tradition, some of whose life-stories see in V.85-89.

708 'Opponent of the Lord of Death', a wrathful from of Mañjuśrī with nine heads and fourteen pairs of hands.

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to the finest absorption of co-emergent joy; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

As Mañjughoṣa clearly explained to you the essential meaning of the 'Prayer for Rebirth in the Land of Bliss', and that of 'A Eulogy of the Authentic Aim of the Invincible Guardian (Maitreya)', you presented both texts in excellent phrasing; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

Whenever you consecrated a representation of enlightened body, speech, or mind, the wisdom beings actually entered into the symbolic beings,[709] by which the deities you had blessed were properly established as fields of karmic benefit for all sentient beings; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

From among the five spiritual sons of the bodhisattva Nāgārjuna who had a discussion on profound dependent arising, the glorious Buddhapālita blessed you with an Indian scripture,[710] which made you realize the intent of the Noble One; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

When visualizing the key-points of the six branches of *Kālacakra*, the ultimate tantra,[711] you directly perceived the Kālacakra deity, and were prophesized to become someone like King Sucandra;[712] O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet. ...

Lord of Dharma, practising the vajra-yoga of enlightened body, when you meditated on the ordinary world and its inhabitants as empty appearances of illusion through the non-dual yoga of the profound (emptiness) and the luminous (manifestations), you arose in the form of the great-bliss deity;[713] O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

Lord of Dharma, practising the vajra-yoga of enlightened speech, when through the three vajra gates (of OṂ Ā HŪṂ) to the lotus (cakra) in the heart you resolved inhalation and exhalation in the tone of the mantra, and your vital energies entered, remained, and dissolved (in the central channel[714]), you experienced the luminosity of Mahāmudrā;[715] O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

Lord of Dharma, practising the vajra-yoga of enlightened mind, when the fierce woman Caṇḍali[716] in the navel cakra caused the letter HAṂ

709 That is, the actual enlightened beings actually 'entered' or became one with their symbolic representations.

710 Buddhapālita was an Indian Buddhist philosopher, who, in his commentary on Nāgārjuna's 'Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way', laid down the foundations of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka (Consequentialist Middle Way) school, which Tsongkhapa later accepted as the final system of Buddhist philosophy. The event described may have happened in a vision or a dream.

711 The *Kālacakra* (Wheel of Time) *Tantra* is seen by the Gelukpa school as the ultimate tantra of the Highest Yoga (*Anuttarayoga*) tantra class.

712 King of the mystical land of Śambhala, who is said to have requested the *Kālacakra Tantra* from the Buddha.

713 A reference to the Kālacakra deity.

714 The central channel which is seen to run down the back, connecting the various *cakra*s, or energy-centres.

715 *Mahāmudrā* (Great Seal/Great Symbol) is a term used for tantric awakening. In Highest *Yogatantra* this is effected by drawing the vital energies (*prāna*) into the central channel and dissolving them therein through the recitation of OṂ Ā HŪṂ, the three syllables of enlightened body, speech and mind, thus causing the fundamental luminosity of the mind to manifest.

716 Personification of inner heat (*tumo*), equivalent of Kuṇḍalīni in Hindu *tantra*.

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at the crown of your head to melt, you revelled in the glory of co-emergent great joy; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet. ...

Sitting on a throne adorned with precious gems, the omniscient Buton Rinchen Drub[717] handed to you a manuscript of the Guhyasamāja Root Tantra, and told you, 'This is yours'; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet. ...

When performing the practice of Cakrasaṃvara,[718] you clearly beheld the deities of the maṇḍala in direct perception, and the hosts of sky-dancers (*ḍākinīs*) of the three outer and inner places[719] delighted you with offerings of vajra songs; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

When performing the spiritual practice of defeating Māra's army, you directly perceived the Sage,[720] Great Tamer of Māra, resplendent like the colour of pure refined gold in a halo of light of a million suns; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet.

Your being having become indivisible from the body, speech and mind of the Victorious One, you destroyed the hosts of Māra, and as the Dharma protectors crushed the demonic forces, shrieks of Māra's defeated troops[721] were heard; O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet. ...

Noble Lord of Dharma, it was clearly prophesized by both Mañjughoṣa and Vajrapāni that (after your passing away) you would sit in the presence of the Invincible Dharma Lord (Maitreya) in the Pure Land of Joy (Tuṣita), and would be known as the bodhisattva Mañjuśrīgarbha. O Glorious Guru, I pay homage at your feet. ...

'Prayer of the Secret Life of Tsongkhapa', trans. T.A.

717 Butön Rinchen Drup (Bu ston rin chen grub, 1290–1364), a high lama of the Sakyapa school, famous for having compiled the first edition of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon.
718 'Wheel of Perfect Bliss' – another great tantra of the Anuttarayoga class.
719 The head, throat and heart cakras (?).
720 Śākyamuni (Sage of the Śākyans) Buddha.
721 Symbolising various mental defilements.

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APPENDIXES

Buddhanet's World Buddhist Directory

This gives addresses of Buddhist centres around the world, which will help you locate a local centre:
http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd/

To hear some Buddhist chanting

Buddhanet chants: http://www.buddhanet.net/audio-chant.htm and http://www.buddhanet.net/ftp05.htm

Books on Buddhism

Overall introductions

L.S. Cousins 'Buddhism' in *A New Handbook of Living Religions,* ed. J.R.Hinnells, Blackwell, 1997, pp.369–444: a clear and succinct overview.

Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 1996, 152 pages: clear introduction by a non-Buddhist academic.

Charles S. Prebish and Damien Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, Routledge, 2006, 299 pages: a clear and well set out guide for students.

Rupert Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford University Press, 1998, 332 pages: clear academic introduction, with an emphasis on the Theravāda.

Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2013, 515 pages: detailed academic survey of the various forms of Buddhism.

Richard H. Robinson, Willard L. Johnson and Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *Buddhist Religions: A Historical Introduction*, 5th edition, Thompson/ Wadsworth, 2005. 357 pages. Covers many aspects of Buddhist cultures.

Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, eds, *The World of Buddhism: Buddhist Monks and Nuns in Society and Culture,* Thames and Hudson, 1991, 308 pages with many illustrations. Chapters on Buddhism in various countries and areas.

Paul Williams, with Anthony Tribe and Alexander Wynne, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*, 2nd edition, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2011, 271 pages.

Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues,* Cambridge University Press, 2000, 478 pages.

Sarah Shaw, *Introduction to Buddhist Meditation*, Routledge, 2008, 296 pages: an overview of the range of methods in Buddhism.

Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: Encounters of Buddhism and Western Culture*, Berkeley, Parallax Press, 1994, 436 pages.

Charles S. Prebish and Martin Baumann, eds, *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia,* University of California Press, 2002, 425 pages.

Guides to spiritual life and dealing with life's difficulties

Jack Kornfield, *A Path With Heart: The Classic Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life,* Rider, 2002, 353 pages.

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Pema Chodron, *How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind*, Sounds True, 2013, 184 pages.
Pema Chodron, *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times*, new edition, Element, 2005, 208 pages.
Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: The Classic Guide to Meditation*, Rider, 2008, 160 pages.
Dalai Lama – Cutler, Howard C., *Art of Happiness - A Handbook for Living*, Hodder And Stoughton Ltd., 1999, 269 pages.

The Life of the Buddha

John S. Strong, *The Buddha: a Short Biography*, Oxford, One World, 2001, 203 pages.

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Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 2nd edition, One World, 1997 (originally 1974) 168 pages: a classic introduction to the Buddha's teachings, as preserved by the Theravada school, by a famous Sri Lankan monk.
Ayya Khema, *When the Iron Eagle Flies: Buddhism for the West*, Wisdom, 1999, 224 pages: a good overview of Theravāda Buddhism, especially meditation, by a Western Buddhist nun.
Ajahn Chah, *Being Dharma: The Essence of the Buddha's Teachings*, Shambhala, 2000, 221 pages: teachings from a famous Thai meditation teacher who inspired many western disciples.
Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*, 2nd edition, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2006, 234 pages.
P.A. Payutto, *Good, Evil and Beyond: Kamma in the Buddha's Teaching*, Bangkok, Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1993, 116 pages – and on Buddhanet website: http://www.buddhanet.net/cmdsg/kamma.htm
A discussion of ethical issues by a leading Thai scholar-monk.

Mahāyāna Buddhism

Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, 2nd edition, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2009, 456 pages.
His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Opening the Eye of New Awareness* 2nd revised edition, (tr. D. S. Lopez), Wisdom, 2005, 160 pages.
John Blofeld, *Bodhisattva of Compassion: The Mystical Tradition of Kuan Yin*, Shambhala Classics, 2009, 158 pages.
Thich Nhat Hanh, *Finding Our True Home: Living the Pure Land Here and Now*, Parallax, 2003, 85 pages.
Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, Shambhala, 2011, 176 pages.

Vajrayāna Buddhism

Paul Williams, with Anthony Tribe and Alexander Wynne, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*, 2nd edition, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2011, 271 pages: includes a good 42 page analysis of the Vajrayāna.
John Powers, *A Concise Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, Snow Lion, 2008, 160 pages.

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Sidney Piburn, ed., *The Dalai Lama; A Policy of Kindness: An Anthology of Writings by and About the Dalai Lama*, 2nd revised edition, Snow Lion, 1990, 148 pages.

Kalu Rinpoche. *Luminous Mind: The Way of the Buddha*, Wisdom Publications, 1997. A comprehensive, accessible, succinct introduction to the Vajrayāna Buddhism of Tibet.

Printed translations and anthologies of translations

Anthologies of Buddhist texts, from all traditions

Edward Conze, *Buddhist Scriptures*, Penguin, 1969, 256 pages.

Rod Bucknell and Chris Kang eds, *The Meditative Way: Readings in the Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation*, Curzon Press, 1997, 274 pages.

Edward Conze and I.B.Horner, *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*, Oneworld, 2000 (originally 1954), 322 pages: good on Indian Buddhism.

William Theadore de Bary, *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan*, Random House, 1992 (originally 1972), 417 pages: good on East Asian Buddhism.

John S. Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretation*, 3rd edition, Wadsworth, 2007, 432 pages: covers many aspects of Buddhism, including contemporary ones.

Donald S. Lopez, *Buddhist Scriptures*, Penguin, 2004, 555 pages.

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The Life of the Buddha

Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, *The Life of the Buddha: According to the Pāli Canon*, Pariyatti Press, 2003, 400 pages.

Theravāda

Good anthologies of translations of the Buddha's discourses (*suttas*) from the Theravāda collection of these in the Pāli language, are:

Rupert Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha*, Penguin, 2008, 307 pages.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, *In the Buddha's Words*, Wisdom, 2005, 485 pages.

Sarah Shaw, *Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from the Pāli Canon*, Routledge, 2006, 238 pages.

Selected already existing full translations are listed below. Reference is generally to volume and page number of the text in Pāli; but for the *Dhammapada, Sutta-nipāta, Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, it is to verse number. The page numbers of the relevant original text (Pali Text Society (PTS) editions) are generally given in brackets in its translation, or at the top of the page. Partial translations of many of them are also available on this website: Access to Insight. This references texts by *sutta* number, or section and *sutta* number, but also gives, in brackets, the volume and pages number of the start of the relevant text in Pāli (PTS edition).

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Four main *nikāyas*:

Aṅguttara-nikāya: trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1 vol., *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom, 2012, 1936 pages).

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Texts of the fifth *nikāya*:

Dhammapada: trans. K.R.Norman, *The Word of the Doctrine* (London: PTS, 1997); trans. V.Roebuck), *The Dhammapada* (London: Penguin, 2010, 246 pages).

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Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa: trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga* (Onalaska, WA: BPS Pariyatti, 1999). Available to download at:

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Yoshito S. Hakeda, Y. S. *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna,* new edition, Columbia University Press, 2006, 160 pages: an important text for Chinese Buddhism.
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Bodhisattva-bhūmi (Stages of the Bodhisattva): *Bodhisattvabhūmi* 1-10, *Śīlapaṭalaṃ*, edited by Nalinaksha Dutt, K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, 1966. Accessed on the Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon website, at http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/book/328 Trans. D.S. Trans. of the chapter on ethical discipline in *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics with Commentary by Tsong-kha-pa*, trans. M.Tatz, (Ewin Mellen, 1986).

Bodhisattva-piṭaka (Collected Teachings on the Bodhisattva): *Taishō* vol.11, text 310. Trans. T.T.S. and D.S.. Full trans. by Fredrik Liland, Jens Braarvig and David Welsh published by the 84000 Project (2014/forthcoming) http://read.84000.co

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'Buddha Pronounces the *Sūtra* of Neither Increase Nor Decrease'/*Fo shui bu zeng bu ian jing, Taishō* vol.16, text 668, trans. D.S.. Full trans. Rulu in his *Teachings of the Buddha* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2012, pp.97–102), and posted as *sūtra* 14 at: http://www.sutrasmantras.info

'Confessional *Samādhi* of the *Lotus Sūtra*'/*Fa-hua San-mei Chan-yi*, of Zhiyi: *Taishō* vol.46, text 954. Trans. T.T.S. & D.S.. Full trans. Peter Johnson, 2001: http://www.tientai.net/lit/hksmsg/HKSMSG.htm

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caryā-avatāra , 'Engaging in the Conduct of *Bodhisattvas*' (or *Bodhicaryā-avatāra,* 'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening'*:* BCA), of the great Indian monk-philosopher Śāntideva (c.650–750), which is among the most famous literary classics of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Tibetan version has been translated into English a number of times, including: Stephen Batchelor, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, 1979), and Vesna Wallace and B. Allan Wallace, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1997). For a translation made from the original Sanskrit, see Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra - A Guide to the Buddhist Path to Awakening* (Windhorse Publications, Birmingham, 2002).

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'The Precious Garland': *rGyal po la gtam bya ba rin po che'i phreng ba*, Derge Tengyur Nr. 4158, *spring yig*, vol.ge 107a-126a, Ed. in Thesaurus Literaturae Buddhicae, University of Oslo, http://https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=volume&vid=69 This is the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit *Ratnāvalī*, or *Ratnamālā:* RV) of Nāgārjuna, one of the greatest Indian Buddhist masters, the founder of Madhyamaka philosophy. Written in the form of an epistle addressed to

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a young ruler of the Śātavāhana Empire (around. 2nd century CE), it is a series of Mahāyāna instructions in 500 verses. For a full translation, see *Buddhist Advice For Living and Liberation, Nāgārjuna's Precious Garland*, Analysed, translated and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins (Snow Lion, 2007).

'The Song of the Four Mindfulnesses': *dBu ma'i lta khrid dran pa bzhi ldan gyi mgur dbyangs dngos grub char 'bebs*, In: Collected Works of the 7th Dalai Lama. vol. 1: *Blo sbyong dang 'brel ba'i gdams pa dang snyan mgur gyi rim pa phyogs gcig tu bkod pa don ldan tshangs pa'i sgra dbyangs*, 'Bras spungs dga' ldan pho brang edition (1945), pp. 397ff., 450–452 (27b.6–28b.2). The full title of this work means 'Guidance on the View of the Middle Way: Song of the Four Mindfulnesses Showering a Rain of Accomplishments'). This work of the Gelukpa school is by Kalsang Gyatso, the Seventh Dalai Lama (*bsKal bzang rgya mtsho*, 1708–1757). For a full explanation of the text by the present (XIV) Dalai Lama, see Dalai Lama and Jeffrey Hopkins: *The Buddhism of Tibet and the Key to the Middle Way* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), and its later editions.

'*Tantra* Showing the Transparency of the Samantabhadra's Buddha Mind': *rDzogs pa chen po kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal du bstan pa'i rgyud las, smon lam stobs po che btabs pas sems can thams cad sangs mi rgya ba'i dbang med par bstan pa'i le'u dgu pa*, In gter chos, rtsa gsum gling pa Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre, Text W4CZ1042 (Pharphing, Kathmandu, Nepal: bka' gter sri zhu e waM dpe skrun khang, 2002–2010). This is attributed to the Godemchen (*lGod rdem can*, 1337–1409), the Great Treasure-finder (*gter ston*) of the Nyingma school.

'The Tibetan Book of the Dead': *Zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol las bar do thos grol gyi skor* (Tibetan Cultural Printing Press, Dharamsala 1994). The 'Tibetan Book of the Dead' – attributed to Padmasambhava (9th century), rediscovered by Karma Lingpa (14th century) of the Nyingma school – is a kind of 'guidebook' to the intermediate states which follow after death. Originally entitled 'The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate State(s)' (Tibetan *Bar do thos grol*), it was the first piece of Tibetan literature which captured the imagination of the West. It has been translated into English (and many other Western languages) many times, most recently (and most completely) by Gyurme Dorje: *The Tibetan Book of the Dead, The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate States* (Penguin Books, 2005: TBD).

'The Words of My Precious Teacher': *sNying thig sngon 'gro'i khrid yig kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung* by rDza dpal sprul (Yashodhara Publications, New Delhi, 1998). Composed by by Patrul Rinpoche (*dPal sprul rin po che*, 1808–1887), it is a standard handbook of the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism on the stages of the path. For a full English translation, see Patrul Rinpoche: *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, trans. Padmakara Translation Group (HarperCollins Publishers, 1994: WPT).

Abbreviations used in the Vajrayāna sections

BCA: *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening) by Śāntideva (translations also listed in Mahāyāna translations section).

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FG: *The Flight of the Garuda: The Dzogchen Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism,* by Lama Shabkar (trans. Keith Dowman, Wisdom, 1994, 240 pages).

HSM: *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* (trans. Garma C.C. Chang, Shambhala, 1977, and new edition, City Lights, 1999, 736 pages).

JOL: *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation: The Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings,* by Gampopa (trans. Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche, Snow Lion, 1998, 480 pages).

LP: *A Lamp for the Path and Commentary by Atiśa* (trans. & annotation of the *Bodhi-patha-pradīpa* by S.J. Richard Sherbourne, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London, 1983).

MMK: *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* (Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way) by Nāgarjuna (translations listed in Mahāyāna translations section)

MSA: *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* (The Ornament of Mahāyāna *Sūtras*) by Maitreya-Asaṅga (translations listed in Mahāyāna translations section)

RV: *Ratnāvalī* (The Precious Garland) by Nāgārjuna (trans. and edited Jeffrey Hopkins as *Buddhist Advice For Living and Liberation, Nāgārjuna's Precious Garland*, Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion, 2007).

TBD: *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* by Padmasambhava (trans. Gyurme Dorje, Penguin, 2005, 535 pages).

UT: *Uttaratantra-śāstra* (Treatise on the Highest Continuum), also known as the *Ratnagotra-vibhāga* (Analysis of Jewels and Lineages), by Maitreya-Asaṅga. (trans. Jikido Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga - Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Serie Orientale Roma XXXIII ISMEO 1966).For a translation from Tibetan, see Rosemarie Fuchs (translator): *Buddha Nature: The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra With Commentary by Arya Maitreya* (Ithaca N.Y., Snow Lion, 2000)

WPT: *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* by Patrul Rinpoche (trans. Padmakara Translation Group, HarperCollins, 1994).

Texts referred to in Vajrayāna material by their translated titles, along with their original Sanskrit titles. Where these titles are not definitely known, the Sanskrit it preceded by an *

'Advice to King Gautamīputra' = **Gautamīputra-rāja-upadeśa,* by Nāgārjuna. Trans. from Tibetan by Ven. Lozang Jamspal, Ven. Ngawang Samten Chophel and Peter Della Santina as *Nāgārjuna's Letter to King Gautamīputra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978).

'Akṣayamati Request Sūtra' = *Akṣayamati-nirdeśa Sūtra*

'Apprehending the True Dharma Sūtra' = *Saddharma-parigraha Sūtra*

'Aspiration Prayer for Excellent Conduct Sūtra' = *Bhadracaryā-praṇidhāna-mahārāja-paribandha Sūtra*

'Collection on Bodhisattvas' = *Bodhisattva-piṭaka*

'Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra' = *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*

'Dhāraṇī Leading to Non-conceptuality' = *Avikalpa-praveśa-dhāraṇī*

'Dharma Compendium Sūtra' = *Dharma-saṃgīti Sūtra*

'Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening' = *Bodhicaryāvatāra;* full title: *'Engaging in the Conduct of Bodhisattvas'* = *Bodhisattva-caryā-avatāra;* see BCA under abbreviations

'Fragment Sūtra' (Tib. *mDo sil bu*) – Sanskrit version unknown.

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'Fundamental Treatise of the Middle Way' = *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*, by Nāgārjuna (=MMK)
'Garland of Buddhas Sūtra' = *Buddha-avataṃsaka Sūtra;* see also *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in Mahāyāna text list.
'Great *Tantra* of the Primordial Buddha' = *Ādi-buddha-mahā-tantra*; an alternative title for the *Kāla-cakra-tantra,* The '*Tantra* on the Wheel of Time' (see LP p.185. n.19.)
'Heap of Noble Jewels Sūtra' = *Ārya-Ratnakūṭa Sūtra*
'Kāśyapa Request Sūtra' = *Kāśyapa-parivarta Sūtra*
'Letter to a Friend' = *Suhṛllekha,* by Nāgārjuna
'Meeting of Father and Son Sūtra' = *Pitā-putra-saṃāgama Sūtra* 'Middle Way Dependent Arising' = *Madhyamaka-pratītyasaṃutpāda,* by Nāgārjuna
'Moon Lamp Sūtra' = *Candra-pradīpa Sūtra*
'Noble Collection' = *Ārya-ratnaguṇa-samcaya-gāthā;* full title: 'Noble Collection of Songs on the Precious Qualities (of the Perfection of Wisdom)', one of the earliest Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*s.
'Noble Sūtra Requested by Brahmā' = *Ārya-brahma-paripṛcchā Sūtra*
'Noble Ten Stages Sūtra' = *Ārya-Daśabhūmika Sūtra*
'Ornament of Clear Realization' = *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, by Asaṅga, inspired by Maitreya
'Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras' = *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra*, by Asaṅga, inspired by Maitreya (=MSA)
'Ornament of Mañjuśrī's Buddha-Field Sūtra' = *Mañjuśrī-buddha-kśetrālaṃkāra Sūtra*
'Perfection of Wisdom in Sūtra 8,000 Lines' = *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*
'Precious Garland' = *Ratnāvalī,* or *Ratnamālā* by Nāgārjuna (=RV)
'Recollection of the Sublime Dharma Sūtra' = **Saddharma-smṛtyu-pasthāna Sūtra*
'Rice Seedling Sūtra' = *Śālistamba Sūtra;* translations listed in Mahāyāna translations section 'Narration of the Realization of Avalokiteśvara' = *Avalokiteśvara-avadāna*
'Secrets of the Tathāgata Sūtra' = *Tathāgatācintya-guhya-nirdeṣa Sūtra*
'Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness' = *Śūnyatā-śaptati* of Nāgārjuna. Translated from Tibetan by David Ross Komito, *Nagarjuna's Seventy Stanzas: A Buddhist Psychology of Emptiness* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1987),
'Showing the Indivisible Nature of the Expanse of Phenomena Sūtra' = *Dharmadhātu-prakṛtyasaṃbheda-nirdeśa Sūtra*
'Stages of the Bodhisattva' = *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, by Asaṅga
'Flower-array Sūtra' = *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra,* the last chapter of the large 'Garland of Buddhas Sūtra'.

Translations listed in Mahāyāna translations section

'Twenty Stanzas' = *Viṃśatika-kārikā,* by Vasubandhu
'Viradatta Request Sūtra' = *Viradatta-paripṛcchā Sūtra*
'Unwavering Dharmatā Sūtra' = *Dharmatā-svabhāva-śūnyatācala-pratisarvaloka Sūtra*
'White Lotus of Sublime Dharma Sūtra' = *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*

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Web sources on Buddhism, including translations

General links and resources

BuddhaNet: Buddhist Information and Education Network: http://www.buddhanet.net – including: e-Library, World Buddhist Directory (http://www.buddhanet.info/wbd), and audio resources.

DharmaNet: http://www.dharmanet.org – including: learning resource centre, study centre, and directory.

LinksPitaka: http://www.pitaka.ch/intro.htm

Buddhist Links and General Resources: http://www.academicinfo.net/buddhismmeta.html

Sacred Texts site: http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/index.htm - for out of copyright translations.

Huntington Archive of Buddhist and Related Art: http://huntingtonarchive.org/

International Dunhuang Project: http://idp.bl.uk/pages/education_links.a4d

Digital Dictionary of Buddhism: http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb

Buddhist Dictionary- Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines, by Nyanatiloka Mahathera: http://www.budsas.org/ebud/bud-dict/dic_idx.htm

Theravāda Buddhism

Access to Insight: http://www.accesstoinsight.org/index.html - includes: translations of many texts from the Pāli Canon, teachings of Thai forest teachers, Buddhist Publication Society 'Wheel' booklets, other books and teachings, guidance on Pāli, and much more.

Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka http://www.bps.lk – downloadable 'Wheel' booklets and other publications.

Pali Text Society: http://www.palitext.com – for ordering translations of Theravāda Buddhist texts

The Works of Ven. P.A.Payutto: http://www.buddhistelibrary.org/en/thumbnails.php?album=152&page=1 – e-books from this renowned Thai scholar-monk. Also see new translations by Robon Moore: http://www.buddhistteachings. org/buddhadhamma-translations-2

Chanting book - The Buddhist Society of Western Australia Theravāda, on BuddhaSasana website: http://www.budsas.org/ebud/chant-bswa/chantbook.htm

Forest Dhamma Books: downloadable books: http://www.forestdhammabooks.com

Insight Meditation Society, Barre, Massachusetts: http://www.dharma.org

The Bhāvanā Society: http://www.bhavanasociety.org

Forest Sangha Publications: http://forestsanghapublications.org/

General Mahāyāna, especially texts

Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai downloadable translations of Mahāyāna texts from Chinese and Japanese: http://www.bdkamerica.org/bdk-tripitaka-digital-downloads

www.dhammadownload.com

Mahāyāna Buddhist Sutras in English: http://www.huzheng.org/en/mtlee/
Buddhism.org Buddhist Sutras: http://www.buddhism.org/Sutras
Dharma Realm Buddhist Association: http://www.drba.org/
Buddha Sutras Mantras Sanskrit: http://www.sutrasmantras.info/sutra0.html
Virtual Religion Index for links to translations: http://virtualreligion.net/vri/buddha.html

East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism

The Zensite: http://www.thezensite.com - academic essays etc. on Zen.
Portland Zen Community – Primary Zen Texts: http://www.zentexts.org/primary-texts.html
Links Pitaka-Jodo-Shinshu: http://www.pitaka.ch/indxshin.htm
Thich Nhat Hanh's Community of Mindful Living: https://communityformindfulliving.com/
Amida Net: http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai
Nichiren Shū: http://www.nichiren-shu.org/
Sōka Gakkai International USA: http://www.sgi-usa.org/

Vajrayāna Buddhism

The Berzin Archives: http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/index.html A vast site including several e-books and covering many aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, by Gelukpa scholar Alexander Berzin.
The Tibetan and Himalayan Library: http://www.thlib.org/about/wiki/guide%20to%20thdl%20resources.html
Tibetan Buddhist Chanting – Shar Gan-Ri Ma: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaFUS4HVpGg
Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (Gelukpa): http://fpmt.org/ and – Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive: http://www.lamayeshe.com/index.php
Kagyu Samye Ling Tibetan Centre: http://www.samyeling.org (Kagyupa)
Lion's Roar https://www.lionsroar.com/ (Kagyupa) Buddhist-oriented newspaper/magazine.
Dzogchen Center: http://www.dzogchen.org/

Free online journals and e-texts of print journals

Philosophy East and West, Japanese Journal of Religious Studies , Journal of Oriental Studies, and Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism - on website of the National Taiwan University, Center for Buddhist Studies: http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/DLMBS/en/fulltext/ There are also selections from a range of other journals are at: http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/DBLM/pg2-En/pg2_index_2.htm
Journal of Buddhist Ethics: http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/
Journal of Global Buddhism: http://www.globalbuddhism.org

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Glossary of key Buddhist terms and names

P = Pāli, Skt = Sanskrit, Ch = Chinese, Jp = Japanese, Tib = Tibetan

Note that names are not italicized, except for the names of texts. The symbol > indicates: see entry on this.

Pāli versions of terms are generally given first, except where the Sanskrit form is more generally recognized.

abhidhamma (P; Skt *abhidharma*): third section of early Buddhist Canon, on systematized teachings, psychology, philosophy (see ThI.2 and 3 and V.81 note on 'phenomenon').

accomplishments (Skt *siddhi*): these can be mundane >supernormal powers, similar to those listed in Theravāda texts (see L.35 and Th.69 and 131), or supra-mundane in nature, as awakening.

acquisition (P& Skt *upadhi*): foundation, basis, ground, or substratum of rebirth. It refers to both possessions, acquisitions, and attachment to these, leading to suffering.

act with immediate bad karmic consequences (P *kamma ānanatarika, Skt karma ānantarya*): any of the five heinous actions entailing that one's next rebirth will definitely be in a hell: shedding the blood of a Buddha, killing an *arhant*, causing schism in the Sangha, killing one's mother, or killing one's father. (The first involves injuring, rather than killing, a Buddha, as it is considered to be impossible to kill a Buddha.)

āgama (Skt): a collection of non-Mahāyāna *sūtra*s (see > *sutta*) in Sanskrit, or translated from it, paralleling one of the Pāli >*nikāya*s (see ThI.3, MI.5).

Amitābha (Skt): 'Infinite Light', perhaps the most important heavenly Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism (see M.158, 114).

arahant (P, or *arahant*; Skt *arhant*): in early Buddhism and the Theravāda school, a fully liberated person who has attained >nirvana in their present life (see LI.3, Th.7, 9, 188, 205, 211). In the Mahāyāna, a person of advanced spiritual attainment, but who has further to go to attain the highest goal: perfectly awakened Buddhahood (see MI.2 and 3 and M.49, 66, 129, 152). A (perfectly awakened) >Buddha is also an *arahant*, but has greater knowledge than other *arahant*s.

Asaṅga (310–90?): founder, with his half-brother >Vasubandhu, of the >Yogācāra school of the Mahāyāna. He is said to have been inspired by the *bodhisattva* >Maitreya to compose texts such as the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* ('Ornament of Mahāyāna *Sūtra*s'), which includes a systematisation of Mahāyāna ideas on the nature of a Buddha (see MI.5).

Asoka (P; Skt Aśoka): Buddhist emperor of India 268–39 BCE, who helped Buddhism spread rapidly (see GI.1 and note to Th.15).

Atiśa (982–1054), who spearheaded a revival of Buddhism in Tibet, and author of *Bodhi-patha-pradīpa*, 'The Lamp for the Path to Awakening' (see VI.7 and V.10).

attention (P & Skt *manasikāra*). Attention that is *ayoniso* is unwise, careless, and focussed only on superficial appearances, such that mental defilements are stimulated. Attention that is *yoniso* is wise, careful,

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and probing, noting features of things that the defilements do not feed on (see Th.130).

Avalokiteśvara (Skt): The 'Lord who Looks (in compassion)': perhaps the most important heavenly >*bodhisattva* in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Particularly embodies >compassion. Known as Guanyin in China (see M.55).

awakening/enlightenment (P & Skt *bodhi*): awakening *from* the sleep of life distorted by the >defilements, and awakened *to* the true nature of reality by direct insight into the nature of reality of such a depth that such moral and spiritual faults are destroyed, so that a person becomes an >*arahant*, >solitary-buddha or (perfectly awakened) >Buddha. One who is 'awakened' in this sense is not a person who has experienced the initial awakening *of* some new quality or experience, which is yet to mature *fully*, but one with a definitive attainment of liberation.

awakening-mind (Skt *bodhi-citta*): in the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, the deep and compassionate aspiration to take the long path of the >*bodhisattva* to becoming a (perfectly awakened) >Buddha, the constant bearing in mind of this goal through compassionate action, with 'ultimate' *bodhi-citta* being the awakened mind itself (see M.71–6 and V.10, 33–9).

birth-and-death: see >*saṃsāra.*

Blessed One (P & Skt *Bhagavā*) (pronounced 'Bless-ed One)': also translated as 'Exalted One' or 'Lord': a term for the Buddha (see LI.4, L.1, 22, Th.1 and M.1). The Chinese equivalent means 'World-honoured One'.

bodhi-citta: see >awakening-mind.

Bodhidharma: 5th-6th century CE, legendary founder of >Chan/Zen Buddhism in China.

bodhisattva (Skt; P *bodhisatta*): a being-for-awakening: one fully dedicated to becoming a (perfectly awakened) >Buddha. >Gotama is seen to have been a *bodhisattva* for many lives before becoming a Buddha, and in his last he continued to be one prior to his awakening at the age of 35. In the Mahāyāna, a long *bodhisattva* path is described, with advanced *bodhisattva*s, such as >Avalokiteśvara, as akin to heavenly saviour-beings. (See GI.8, LI.7, ThI.2 and end of 6, MI.2 and 3, L.1, 2, Th.6 and section heading before it, and M.64–67).

Brahmā (P & Skt): a god who brahmins, at the time of the Buddha, thought created the world (see heading before Th.169). In Buddhism, there are said to be a number of Brahmās in the universe. They are seen as loving and compassionate gods, in a particular heavenly realm, but are not seen as creating the world (see LI.5 and 7, ThI.6, and note to L.1).

brahmin (P & Skt *brāhmaṇa*): a Hindu priest, member of the highest of four social >classes in the Hindu system (see LI.2 and Th.44). The term is also used figuratively in Buddhism: the 'true brahmin' is the >*arahant.*

brightly shining mind (P *pabhassara citta,* Skt *prabhāsvara citta*): radiant basic nature of mind, normally obscured by >defilements (see Th.124), and when uncovered, an ideal basis for attaining >awakening. In the Mahāyāna, is equated with >Buddha-nature.

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Buddha (P & Skt): an 'Awakened One' or 'Enlightened One'. A term usually preserved for a *sammā sambuddha* (P)/*samyak-sambuddha* (Skt), a 'perfectly awakened Buddha' such as >Gotama. The term *buddha* (without initial capital) can also be applied to an *arahant*. A perfectly awakened Buddha is a being who has attained >awakening/enlightenment (P & Skt *bodhi*) to the fundamental nature of reality, and ended all moral and spiritual defilements (see GI.5, LI.3). Seen to have attained this by their own efforts, after a path of spiritual development over many many lives as a >*bodhisattva*. Teaches the >*Dhamma* extensively and establishes a religion based on this. All schools of Buddhism accept that a number of perfectly awakened Buddhas appear on earth over the eons. The Mahāyāna also accepts perfectly awakened Buddhas currently existing in other parts of the universe.

Buddha-nature (Ch *Fo-xing*, Skt *Buddhatā*?): seen as either the potential for, or hidden actuality of, Buddhahood in all beings. Equivalent to >*Tathāgata-garbha*, and in this work used as the loose translation of this term.

Buddhaghosa (P): famous commentator on texts of the Theravāda school, and author of the influential manual of meditation and doctrine, the *Visuddhimagga*, the 'Path of Purification' (see Th.I.4, Th.91, 134). Active in 5th century CE Sri Lanka.

Cakkavatti: see >Wheel-turning monarch.

Cakrasaṃvara: a Tantric deity.

calm abiding: see >*samatha*

categories of existence (P *khandha*, Skt *skandha*): five groups of processes making up a person (see Th.151, 177–78): >material form, >feeling, >perception, >volitional activities, and >consciousness. Also known as the five *upādāna-khandhas*: the five 'grasped-at categories of existence', i.e. mental and physical processes clung to as 'I'.

Chan (Ch): a Chinese school of Buddhism emphasising meditation and discipline (see M.124–28). Known in Japan as Zen, Thien in Vietnam and Seon in Korea.

Cittamātra (Skt): see >Yogācāra.

classes, four (P *vaṇṇa*, Skt *varna*) of Indian society, seen by Hindus as divinely ordained, but by Buddhists as simply social conventions: priestly >brahmins (P & S *brāhmaṇa*), warrior-rulers (P *khattiya*, Skt *kṣatriya*), tradesmen (P *vessa*, Skt *vaiśya*) and labourers (P *sudda*, Skt *śūdra*).

compassion (P & Skt *karuṇā*): one of the >limitless qualities, and root motivation of the path of the >*bodhisattva* (see Th.136, M.152 and V.23, 67).

consciousness (P *viññāṇa*, Skt *vijñāna*): the basic awareness of the presence of a sense-object, and its discrimination into its parts or aspects, which are recognised by >perception. One of the five >categories of existence.

craving (P *taṇhā*, Skt *tṛṣṇā*): demanding desire, seen as a key condition for the arising of >*dukkha* and the continuation of >*saṃsāra*, hence the second of the >The Truths of the Noble Ones (see L.6, 16, 27, heading before Th.156, Th.18, 55, 132, 158, 164, 177, V.74). Only some forms of desire are seen as 'craving', and as harmful. *Chanda*, the 'desire to do', for example, can have wholesome forms which are part of the Buddhist path.

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Dalai Lama: former ruler of Tibet currently living in exile in India. Key leader of the Gelukpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, one of the four in that tradition. The present Dalai Lama is fourteenth in a line of Dalai Lamas, each of which is seen as both a reincarnation of the last one, and as a re-manifestation of the compassionate *bodhisattva* >Avalokiteśvara.

defilements (P *kilesa*, Skt *kleśa*): mental faults, such as greed, hatred and delusion, that bring about bad actions of body, speech and mind, and their karmic results. The end of them brings >awakening. Sometimes translated as 'afflictions'.

demi-god (P & Skt *asura*): a class of jealous demonic beings who opposed the >gods. The word also refers to one of the four kinds of unfortunate beings among whom evil doers are born (the others are hell-beings, animals and ghosts).

dependent arising (P *paṭicca-samuppāda*, Skt *pratītya-samutpāda*): the general principle that everything (except nirvana, according to the Theravāda) can only arise or exist because of other things which it depends on. Also, the twelve-fold chain of *nidāna*s (causal links) culminating in >*dukkha* (see Th.156–68, M.130–31 and V.61, 74).

deva: see >god.

dhamma (P; Skt *dharma*): a phenomenon, a state of mind, or any mental or physical 'basic process' or 'basic pattern' as a fundamental ingredient of existence, or a 'reality-pattern' in the form of a set of *dhamma*s (see near end of Th.138). Also used as the term for any object of the mind-sense (i.e. of thought, memory or imagination), whether it is real or not. (See ThI.2, heading before Th.12, Th.4, 138, 165, 179, and notes to V.75 and 76).

Dhamma (P; Skt *Dharma*): the Buddha's teachings, the path of Buddhism, and the experiences attained by practising that path, culminating in >nirvana. Also the natural law-orderliness of the world (see GI.6, L.19, Th.12–13, M.14–16).

Dhamma-wheel/*Dharma*-wheel: a symbol for the Buddha's teaching and path (see end of L.27).

dhāraṇī (Skt): powerful formulas or incantations, similar to >mantras.

Dharma-body (Skt *Dharma-kāya*): the inner nature of all Buddhas and the ultimate nature of reality; one of the >Three 'bodies' of a Buddha.

disciple (P *sāvaka*, Skt *śrāvaka*): typically refers to a 'noble disciple', i.e. either an >*arahant* or a person who has had the first spiritual breakthrough that will definitely lead to arahantship in a limited number of lives: a >stream-enterer, >once-returner or >non-returner (see heading before Th.6. and Th.199). In the Mahāyāna, seen as inferior to a >*bodhisattva*, one who aims for the highest goal, Buddhahood (see M.64–6).

dukkha (P; Skt *duḥkha*): broadly, 'suffering', but, as a noun: in its narrowest sense, physical pain, but then also mental pain (suffering, unhappiness), and that which engenders such feelings – 'the painful' (see L.27, Th.150) – the first of the four >Truths of the Noble Ones; as an adjective, it means 'painful', 'a pain', problematic, unsatisfactory, limited and imperfect, and is applied to everything other than >nirvana (see Th.152 and V.18–22).

Dzogchen (Tib *rDzogs chen*; 'Great Completion/Perfection') or *Ati-yoga*):

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a form of practice and associated thought favoured especially by the >Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism (seeV.27 and 70). While central to the Nyingmapa school, it is also practised by adherents of other Tibetan Buddhist schools. According to *Dzogchen* literature, *Dzogchen* is the highest and most definitive path to awakening.

Eastern Buddhism: form of Mahāyāna Buddhism mediated by Chinese culture, i.e. Buddhism of much of China, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Singapore and parts of Malaysia.

elements (P & Skt *dhātu*): the four elements (usually called *mahā-bhūtas*, 'great primaries') are earth/solidity, water/cohesion, fire/temperature, and air/wind/movement: the basic ingredients of physical things. The six elements are these plus space and >consciousness. The eighteen elements are the five physical senses, the mental faculty (see as akin to a sense), the objects of each of these, and the kinds of related >consciousness; the first twelve of these are the >sense-bases.

Emanation-body (Skt *Nirmāṇa-kāya*): the form of a Buddha manifested on earth by an >Enjoyment body Buddha. One of the >Three bodies of a Buddha.

empathetic joy (P & Skt *muditā*): happiness at the success or happiness of another being; one of the four >limitless qualities.

empowerment (Skt *abhiṣeka*): in Vajrayāna Buddhism, the initiation of a practitioner, by a >guru, into a certain kind of practice, and the esoteric texts associated with this.

emptiness (P *suññatā*, Skt *śūnyatā*): in the Theravāda, a term for >nirvana, especially in its aspect as being >non-Self and beyond concepts. In the Mahāyāna, usually refers to the quality of all things as being empty of an >inherent nature/inherent existence (see M.137–41 and V.76), but also used to mean that which is empty of subject-object discrimination (see M.143), and the Buddha-nature as empty of defilements (see M.144) or as empty of a fixed nature (see M.150).

empty (P *suñña*, Skt *śunya*): in the Theravāda, empty of a supposed permanent >Self or what pertains/belongs to such a thing. In the Mahāyāna and Vajrāyāna, typically means empty of an >inherent nature/inherent (separate) existence. See also >non-Self.

Enjoyment-body (Skt *Saṃbhoga-kāya*): a heavenly Buddha as perceived by advanced *bodhisattvas*. One of the >Three bodies of a Buddha.

enlightenment: see >awakening

eon (*kappa*, Skt *kalpa*): a huge span of cosmic time (see Th.63).

equanimity (P *upekkhā*, Skt *upekṣā*): an even-minded, impartial attitude towards self and others, and imperturbability in the face of the ups and downs of life, of oneself and others. One of the four >limitless qualities. The P and Skt term is sometimes also used for mere neutral feeling.

ethical discipline (P *sīla*, Skt *śīla*): wholesome, moral conduct of body and speech, especially by observing the >precepts (see Th.97–8, 110–11, M.80–87, 100–01 and V.45–48). With >meditative concentration and >wisdom, one of the three sections of the >noble eightfold path. One of the >perfections of a >*bodhisattva*.

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expanse of phenomena (Skt *dharma-dhātu*): in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism, a term for the totality of phenomena as seen and understood by a perfectly awakened Buddha.

faculties, the five spiritual (P and Skt *indriya*): >faith, >vigour, >mindfulness, >meditative concentration and >wisdom. Key qualities to develop on the path.

faith (P *saddhā*, Skt *śraddhā*): a heart-centred trust in spiritually advanced people, their qualities and teachings, especially in the >Three Refuges. The first of the five >faculties. Becomes stronger as the effects of spiritual practice are experienced. Not simply cognitive 'belief'.

feeling (P & Skt *vedanā*): pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling-tone, arising from stimulation of any of the five senses or the mind. Not the same as 'emotion', but any emotion will be accompanied by some *vedanā*. While some translate it as 'sensation', this only covers *vedanā* arising from the physical senses, especially touch. One of the five > categories of existence.

form, realm of (P & Skt *rūpa-dhātu*): the realm (*dhātu*) of (pure/subtle/elemental) form which encompasses many of the higher heavens and parallel meditative states. Beyond them are the four 'formless' (*arūpa*) realms (Th.142): of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness and neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Fortunate One (P & Skt *Sugata*): literally 'Well-gone One', an honourific term for a (perfectly awakened) >Buddha.

foundations of mindfulness: see >*satipaṭṭhāna*.

Gampopa (Tib sGam po pa bsod nams rin chen, 1079–1153) of the >Kagyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism, and author of a work whose Tibetan title means 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation'.

Gelukpa (dGe lugs pa) school of Tibetan Buddhism, founded by the reformer >Tsongkhapa on the basis of the earlier Kadampa school and >Atiśa's arrangement of teachings in a series of levels, with a purified tantrism at the top. The school's name means 'Followers of the Way of Virtue', and it emphasizes the study of Madhyamaka, and the following of moral and monastic discipline.

generation and completion stages (Skt *Utpatti-krama* and *sampanna-krama*): the two stages of tantric visualisation practice in *Anuttarayoga tantra*: see >Tantra.

god (P & Skt *deva*): a being in a heavenly rebirth. Subject to birth and death, and so in need of liberation (see Th.58, 62).

Gotama, Siddhattha (P; Skt Gautama, Siddhārtha): Name of the historical Buddha.

great bliss (Skt *mahā-sukha*): a term in Vajrayāna Buddhism for the bliss of >awakening.

Great Vehicle: see >Mahāyāna.

guru (Skt; Tib *lama*): in Vajrayāna Buddhism, a teacher in who great trust is placed as an embodiment of enlightened wisdom and a guide to powerful practices of transformation and the esoteric tantric texts on these (V.30–1). May be either a monk or nun or a layperson.

hell (P and Skt *niraya*): the lowest and worst kind of rebirths, involving very painful experiences for a very long time, as in a prolonged nightmare. They are not seen as eternal, though. The karmic result

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of causing great suffering to others, and attachment to views which supposedly justify such actions.

Hevajra (Skt): tantric deity.

higher knowledge (P *abhiññā*, Skt *abhijñā*): one of six types of direct insight as supernormal knowing arising from a meditatively attuned mind (see *Th.141): >supernormal powers; hearing sounds at great distances, including the sounds of gods; mind-reading; memory of past lives; seeing how beings are reborn according to their karma; liberating knowledge that brings >awakening.

Hīnayāna (Skt) 'Lesser Vehicle': pejorative term used by followers of the Mahāyāna for members of non-Mahāyāna Buddhist schools; in this sense, can mean 'Inferior Vehicle'. Also used in Mahāyāna lands as a term for a Buddhist whose motivation is for personal liberation, rather than the liberation of all beings (see MI.3, VI.3, V.13, 28).

Huayan (Ch, Jp Kegon): a school of Chinese Buddhism which emphasizes the idea of the world as a totality of mutually-conditioning 'interpenetrating' processes (see M.148–50).

Huineng (638–713), influential sixth patriarch of >Chan/Zen Buddhism, whose life and teachings are described in the *Liuzi-tan jing*, or 'Platform *Sūtra* of the Sixth Patriarch' (see M.125–27 and M.167).

hungry ghost (P *peta*, Skt *preta*): one of the kinds of rebirth; as a consequence of previous strong greed, is dominated by unsatisfied hunger and attachment.

icchantika (Skt): a 'cut-off' type or on 'overpowered by desire' – a kind of person almost cut-off from their Buddha-nature, due to strong craving, who finds it very difficult to attain awakening (see M.41 and V.1).

identity: in passages such as V.75 and 76, used instead of the more literal 'self' (Skt *ātman*) when used in the sense of a supposed essence of a person or phenomenon.

ignorance/not-knowing (P *avijjā*, Skt *avidyā*): not in lack of information, but spiritual ignorance: a blindness to or turning away from spiritual insight. An ingrained misperception of the nature of reality, especially the four >Truths of the Noble Ones (see Th.128, 159).

Indra: see >Sakka.

inherent nature/inherent existence (Skt *svabhāva*): a supposed quality of something as separately, independently existing, with a nature that does not depend on anything else.

intermediate state (Skt *antarā-bhava*, Tib *bardo*): a period of adjustment bewteen one life and the next. 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead' is advice on how to deal with the many visions that may be experienced during this, so as to accelerate the path to >awakening.

intoxicating inclination (P *āsava*, Skt *āśrava*): also translated as 'taint', 'canker' or 'outflow': deeply ingrained mental faults, destroyed by the >*arahant*. They are the inclinations towards sensual pleasures, continued existence in some way of being, fixed views, and >ignorance (see Th.128).

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (Tib 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 1829–1870), a prominent nineteenth century representative of the Tibetan >Sakyapa school.

jātaka (P & Skt): a 'birth story' purporting to be about a past life of the Buddha. A text relating such a story (see Th.6).

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Kagyupa (bKa' brgyud pa) school of Tibetan Buddhism (see VI.5). This 'Instruction Lineage School' was founded by Marpa (1012–97), a married layman who had studied with tantric gurus in India and translated many texts. He emphasized a complex system of yoga and secret instructions transmitted from master to disciple. His chief pupil was the great poet-hermit-saint >Milarepa, who was the teacher of >Gampopa.

karma (Skt, but now also English, P *kamma*): lit. 'action', though in Buddhism it refers, more specifically, to the act of will, >volition, behind an action, which is seen as the cause of future pleasant and unpleasant fruits, according to whether it is ethically good or bad (Th.64–72). A good action is said to be >wholesome and a bad one >unwholesome.

karmic benefit (P *puñña*, Skt *puṇya*): the auspicious natural power of good actions to purify the mind and bring beneficial karmic fruits (Th.105–07). Also used for these fruits. It can be shared with others by helping them mentally participate in a good action done on their behalf (Th.109 and M.35–38). The term *puñña/puṇya* is also used for a 'beneficial karma', i.e. a karmically beneficial action whose good nature is such that it naturally produces such future beneficial karmic results. In the past, *puñña/puṇya* has generally been translated as 'merit' and 'meritorious action', but this has connotations of 'that which deserves reward' by some being (such as God), whereas in Buddhism it is seen as naturally leading to beneficial results.

lama (Tib, Skt *guru*): see >guru.

latent resting state (P *bhavaṅga*) of mind: in Theravāda >*Abhidhamma*, a kind of unconscious level of the mind that occurs uninterruptedly in dreamless sleep, and is rapidly flicked in and out of when one is awake.

Lesser Vehicle: see >Hīnayāna.

limitless qualities (P *appamāṇa*, Skt *apramāṇa*) (also known as divine abidings (P & Skt *brahma-vihāra*): wholesome emotions/attitudes that when fully developed break down all limiting barriers between oneself and other beings: >loving kindness, >compassion, >empathetic joy (P & Skt *muditā*) and equanimity (P *upekkhā*, Skt *upekṣā*) (see Th.114–16, 136-37, M113, V.65-8).

Lotus Sūtra: short for *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*, the 'White Lotus of the Sublime Dharma *Sūtra*': key Mahāyāna text which presents ideas on the heavenly nature of the Buddha, and the >'skilful means' that he uses in giving his teachings at various different levels, e.g. >Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna levels (see MI.3, 5, 6, and M.22, 152).

loving kindness (P *mettā*, Skt *maitrī*): the aspiration that any being be well and happy; one of the >limitless qualities (see Th.114–16, 136–37, M.97, 113 and V.16, 66).

lower realms: the three kinds of rebirths at less than a human level: as some kind of animal (including land animals, birds, fish, insects); frustrated, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings.

Madhyamaka (Skt): the 'Middle Way' school: a Mahāyāna philosophical school started by >Nāgārjuna. Focusses on idea of 'emptiness': that everything lacks an inherent existence or inherent nature (see M.138).

Mādhyamika: a follower of the above school.

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mahāsiddha (Skt): 'great accomplished one' – a realised Vajrayāna adept (seeV.70, 85–9).

Mahāyāna (Skt): the 'Great vehicle'. Form of Buddhism which puts much emphasis on the >*bodhisattva* path to Buddhahood, for sake of all beings. Found mainly in China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan, with its >Vajrayāna form in Tibet, Mongolia and Bhutan (see GI.8, LI.3, MI, VI.1, 3 and 4).

Maitreya (Skt, P Metteyya): the 'Kindly One', name of a >*bodhisattva* who will be the next Buddha on earth, in several thousand years' time. Accepted by both Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions (see LI.3, MI.5, heading before L.1, Th.32 and M.131, 148, 156).

Mañjuśrī (Skt): 'Sweet Glory', an important Mahāyāna heavenly >*bodhisattva*, seen to embody the quality of wisdom (see M.69, 113, 134, 136, 141, 153 and V.9).

mantra (Skt; P *manta*): a sacred word or phrase of power, used especially in >Vajrayāna Buddhism to realize the qualities of awakened beings in oneself (see GI.8, VI.4, V.10, 46).

Mantrayāna (Skt): 'Vehicle of Sacred Words', see >*mantra*.

Mantranaya (Skt): the 'Way of Mantras' – equivalent to >Mantra-yāna.

Māra (P & Skt): an evil tempter-deity, seen as the embodiment of sensual desire and death (see LI.5 and 7, note to L.1, L.14, 35, 51, 55, 58, 61, Th.47, 121, 216, 223, M.1, 6, 14, 15, 17, 41, 46, 66, 67, 106, 157, 168, and V.49). The term *māra* is also used to refer to other 'mortal' or 'deadly' things, namely anything impermanent and subject to death, and refers to negative, evil traits found in the human mind, that stifle its bright potential for awakening.

material form, (P & Skt *rūpa)* or the body, as well as materials aspects of the world. One of the five >categories of existence.

means of drawing together harmoniously (P *saṃgaha-vatthu*, Skt *saṃgraha-vastu*): giving (P & S *dāna*), endearing speech (P *peyya-vajja*, Skt *priya-vāditā*), helpful conduct, that guides a person well (P *atha-cariyā*, Skt *artha-caryā*), and impartiality (P *samānattatā*) or working together equally towards a common goal (Skt *samānārthatā*): L.38, Th.229, M.25, 77 and 157.

meditative absorption (P *jhāna*, Skt *dhyāna*): a state of deep meditative trance, in which the mind is very alert but profoundly calm and concentrated. There are four *jhāna*s, of increasing calm and subtlety (see L.15, Th.140 and M.117).

meditative concentration (P & Skt *samādhi*): a deep meditative state in which the mind is calmly composed in a concentrated, unified state focused on a particular object of contemplation (see Th.98 and V.57). Often refers to the >meditative absorptions.

merit: see >karmic benefit.

middle way: the noble eightfold path, which avoids the extremes of harsh asceticism and sensuality (see L.27). Also, in philosophical sense, >dependent arising, which means that the following are erroneous views: a) a person is totally destroyed at death (annihilationism), b) a permanent self exists after death (eternalism) (see *Th.168, 174, M.58–63 and V.32).

Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, c. 1052–c.1135), one of Tibet's most famous yogis and poets (see V.8, 11, 17, 23).

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Milindapañha: see >Nāgasena.

mind and body (P & Skt *nāma-rūpa*): literally 'name and form', meaning the 'sentient body', or 'mental and physical phenomena'. A link in the >dependent arising sequence.

mindfulness (P *sati*, Skt *smṛti*): careful awareness of mental and physical processes, and calling to mind qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma/Dharma and Sangha and realities such as death. A key ingredient of meditation. See Th.134–35, 138–40, M.114–16, V.79.

mindfulness of (or with) breathing (P *ānāpāna-sati*): a key meditation method that contemplates the in and out flow of the breath, and states of body and mind that arise when doing this (see Th.138–39, M.115 and V.69).

monk (P *bhikkhu*, Skt *bhikṣu*): lit. 'almsman': a Buddhist monk (see Th. 189–90, 193–98, 212–19).

Nāgārjuna: (c.150-250 CE) founder of the >Madhyamaka school.

Nāgasena: 1st century BCE? A learned monk who debates with king Milinda in the Theravāda text called *Milindapañha*, or 'Milinda's Questions' (see ThI.2, 4, heading before Th.95, Th.10, 90, 146, 174, 185, 226, 231).

Nichiren (Jp): name of a monk (1222-82) who founded a Buddhist school, named after him, which emphasizes single-minded faith in the >*Lotus Sūtra*.

nikāya (P): one of the five sections of the *sutta* collection of the Theravādins (see ThI.2 and 3).

nikāya (P & Skt): a monastic fraternity or sect.

nirvana (Skt *nirvāṇa*, P *nibbāna*): lit. 'extinguishing', i.e. extinguishing of the of the 'fires' of attachment, hatred and delusion, which cause >*dukkha*, and of *dukkha* itself (see L.17). In the Mahāyāna, the goal becomes Buddhahood, seen as the highest nirvana (see M.151–55 and V.79). An advanced >*bodhisattva* is also seen to experience 'nirvana which is not based on anything' (*apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa;* M.67), in which there is no attachment to either >*saṃsāra* or nirvana.

noble eightfold path (that goes to the cessation of >*dukkha*): right view/seeing, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditative concentration (see L.27 and Th.99–101). The path is 'eightfold' not in the sense of having eight separate 'steps', but in the sense of having eight factors that need be developed into a harmonious, mutually supporting set.

noble ones (P *ariya*, Skt *ārya*): a person who has been deeply spiritually transformed by a direct insight into the nature of reality (see >Truths of the Noble Ones). Includes: >stream-enterers, >once-returners, >non-returners, >*arahants*, and those well advanced on the path to becoming one of these four; >solitary-buddhas; perfectly awakened Buddhas; and, in the Mahāyāna, >bodhisattvas who have experienced the 'path of seeing' so as to be established on one of the ten bodhisattva stages.

Noble Truths: see >Truths of the Noble Ones.

non-returner: a level of spiritual lnobility just below that of the >*arahant*. One who will have no more rebirths as a human or lower god but will be reborn in one of the 'pure abode' heavens (where only

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non-returners are born), where he or she will finally become an *arahant* (see Th.201).

non-Self (P *anattā*, Skt *anātman*): a description of something as lacking a permanent >Self or essence, and also as not related to such a supposed thing. It is said that 'everything is non-Self' (see Th.170–79, M.133–36 and V.75). See also >empty.

Northern Buddhism: form of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism whose texts are largely preserved in Tibetan, i.e. Buddhism of Tibet and other regions of China, Mongolia, Bhutan, and parts of Nepal and the far north of India.

not-knowing: see >ignorance.

nun (P *bhikkhunī*, Skt *bhikṣuṇī*): lit. 'almswoman': a Buddhist nun (see Th.189–90, 220–25).

Nyingmapa (rNying ma pa), the oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism, which looks back to >Padmasambhava as its founder. Its name means those who (*pa*) are 'Adherents of the Old (*Tantras*)'. It has a strong emphasis on tantrism and transformative experience, coupled with study, as the basis of learning (see VI.5). Its highest teaching is that of >*Dzogchen*.

once-returner: grade of spiritual nobility just below that of a >non-returner. Among his or her future rebirths, there will only be one at the level of a human or lower god (see Th.201).

Padmasambhava: 8th century Vajrayāna teacher who helped establish Buddhism in Tibet.

painful/the painful: see >*dukkha*.

Pāli Canon: Theravāda collection of scriptures.

Pāli: language in which the Theravāda texts are preserved, also used for chanting.

parinirvāṇa (Skt; P *parinibbāna*): the passing into final nirvana of a Buddha or >*arahant* when they die (see L.69, Th.10–11, M.5–6).

path (P *magga*, Skt *marga*): a way to liberation: see >noble eightfold path. The Mahāyāna path of the >*bodhisattva* is itself comprised of a series of five paths, those of: accumulation or collection (*saṃbhāra-mārga)*; connection, application or preparation (*prayoga-mārga)*; seeing (*dārśana-māraga*), which is the direct insight which begins the spiritually 'noble' phase; development (*bhāvanā-mārga*), in which the ten stages of the noble *bodhisattva* are developed; and the adept (*aśaikṣa-mārga*), at Buddhahood. See footnote to v.59 of V.10.

Patrul Rinpoche (Tib dPal sprul rin po che, 1808–1887), author of a Tibetan text whose title means 'The Words of my Precious Teacher', a standard handbook of the >Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism on the stages of the path (see VI.7, and V.18, 22).

perception (P *saññā*, Skt *saṃjñā*): that which classifies, labels, interprets and recognizes sense objects. One of the five >categories of existence.

perfection (Skt *pāramitā*, P *pāramī*): a moral or spiritual perfection, as developed by a >*bodhisattva* (see Th.6, M.100–06 and V.42–54). The Theravāda list of these is: generosity, >ethical discipline, renunciation, >wisdom, >vigour, patient acceptance, truthfulness, resolute determination, >loving kindness and >equanimity. The Mahāyāna list is: generosity, >ethical discipline, patient acceptance, >vigour, >meditative absorption, >wisdom, >skilful means, vow, power and gnosis.

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perfection of wisdom (Skt *prajñā-pāramita*): a wisdom which does not cling to anything, as it directly sees that things are >empty of any essence or independent nature or independent existence. Also the name of a class of Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

precepts, the five (P *pañca-sīla*, Skt *pañca-śīla*): ethical norms generally seen as binding on all lay Buddhists, to avoid: killing any being, theft, sexual misconduct, lying, or taking intoxicants (see Th.110, M.81-82, cf.112).

pure abodes (P *suddhāvāsa*, Skt *śuddhāvāsa*): five heavens in the realm of subtle >form in which only >non-returners are reborn. There they become >*arahants*.

Pure Land: in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the spiritual world of a heavenly Buddha. Also the name of a school of Chinese/Korean/Japanese Buddhism focused on the heavenly Buddha >Amitābha (see M.159).

relics (P *sarīra*, Skt *śarīra*): the physical remains of a Buddha or other liberated person, found amongst their cremation ashes. Seen as imbued with a wonder-working auspicious power, and enshrined in >*stūpas*.

renunciant (P *samaṇa*, Skt *śramaṇa*): a non-brahmin wandering ascetic religious seeker, including Buddhist and Jain monks (see LI.2, and L.13, 14).

righteous (P *dhammika*, Skt *dharmika*): acting in accord with the >Dhamma and >ethical discipline, so as to be just, compassionate, ethical.

rig pa (Tib): 'knowing': non-dual knowledge in which there is no difference or separation between the subject (mind) and the object of perception.

Sakka (P; Skt Śakra): a Buddhist name for the Vedic god Indra, leader of the gods of the heaven of the Thirty-three. Seen in Buddhism as a disciple of the Buddha, and as often conversing with the Buddha (see L.2, 31, 33, 36, 69, Th.34, 36,M.39, 71, 100, 149, 150, 168, 221 and *V.18, 48, 80–2).

Śākyamuni (Skt): the 'Sage of the Śākyan (state)': usual Mahāyāna title for the historical Buddha, and the heavenly Buddha who manifested him on earth. The Pāli term Sakyamuni is used as an epithet of Gotama Buddha.

Sakyapa (Tib Sa skya pa) school of Tibetan Buddhism, founded in 1073 at the Sakya monastery (see VI.5). It is noted for its scholarship and is close to the >Kagyupa school in most matters.

Samantabhadra: the name of a key *bodhisattva* (see M.39, 71, 107) and also of the ever-awakened *Ādibuddha* (see V.6).

samatha (P; Skt *śamatha*): 'calm', 'peace' or 'tranquillity': type of meditation which develops these states by attaining the >meditative absorptions (see Th.132, 138 and M.120).

saṃsāra (P & Skt): 'wandering on': a term for the round of rebirths, the cycle of birth-and-death and, more generally, the whole conditioned world (see Th.55–8 and V.17–22).

Sangha (P & Skt *saṅgha*, also Skt *saṃgha*): the monastic 'community', also the Noble 'community' of fully and partially liberated persons (the third of the >Three Refuges).

Sanskrit: language in which many of the texts of Mahāyāna and Vajra-

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yāna Buddhism came to be written. These now mainly exist only in Tibetan and Chinese translations.

Śāntideva (c. 650–750), >Mādhyamika author of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* ('Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening'), on the *bodhisattva* perfections, and *Śikṣā-samuccaya* ('Compendium of (*Bodhisattva*) Training'), that quotes from many Mahāyāna *sūtra*s (see *MI.5, *VI.6 and 7).

Sarvāstivāda (Skt): one of the non-Mahāyāna schools of early Buddhism, once very successful in northern India. Their characteristic doctrine is the 'all exists', i.e. the past and future exists a well as the present.

Sarvāstivādin (Skt): a follower of above school.

śāstra (Skt): a 'treatise' by a named author.

satipaṭṭhāna (P, Skt *smṛtyupasṭhāna*): the four 'foundations', 'establishments' or 'applications' of >mindfulness (P *sati*, Skt *smṛti*): meditative contemplation of body, feelings, mind-states and >*dhamma*s (see Th.138).

self (P *atta*, Skt *ātman*): a term that is used both in the everyday, acceptable, sense of 'oneself', but also in the sense of a permanent essence of a person, represented in this work with an initial capital letter: Self. While this idea of Self is accepted in non-Buddhist Indian religions, the Buddha did not accept anything as being a Self, or as belonging to such a thing. He thus taught 'everything is non-Self' and that everything is 'empty of Self and what pertains to Self' (see Th.170). In the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, *ātman* is also a term for a supposed essence of any phenomenon, an essential identity (see >identity), though all is seen as empty of such a thing.

sense-bases (P & Skt *āyatana*): the 'internal' sense-bases are the five physical senses and the mental faculty (*mano*), and the 'external' ones are the six objects of these.

sensual pleasure (P & Skt *kāma*): a term for desire for alluring objects of the five senses, and also for these objects in their attractive aspects, especially of a sexual nature.

siddha (Skt): an 'accomplished one', i.e. accomplished on the Vajrayāna path. Also see >*mahāsiddha.*

skill in means/skilful means (Skt *upāya-kauśalya*): the wise and compassionate means (*upāya*) of a Buddha in adapting his teachings to the capacities of his audience (see MI.2, 3, 6, L.33, M.12, 22, 67, 69, 113, 168 and V.6); the skill of a Buddha or >*bodhisattva* in adapting his form of appearance (M.106); the methods used by a >*bodhisattva* in sometimes breaking a moral precept if circumstances mean that this is seen as necessary in compassionately helping someone.

solitary-buddha (Skt *pratyeka-buddha,* P *pacceka-buddha*): a person who becomes awakened at a time when the teachings of a (perfectly awakened) >Buddha are not available in the world, and who teaches others only to a small extent. The Mahāyāna sees those who aim at this goal, or to become >*arahant*s, as practising at a >'Hīnayāna' level (see LI.3, ThI.6, MI.2 and 3, M.22 introduction, M.64, 100, 108, 153 and V.1, 70)

son of good family (P *kula-putta*, Skt *kula-putra*): son of a family of good ethical norms. When not referring explicitly to a male, it can simply mean any 'child/offspring of good family'.

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Southern Buddhism: form of Buddhism particularly mediated by Sri Lanka, i.e. Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and parts of south Vietnam. Recently also active in Nepal. Theravāda with a little residual influence from Mahāyāna.

special insight: translation, through Tibetan, of Skt >*vipaśyanā*. See V.40, vv.21–3.

spiritual friend (P *kalyāṇa-mitta*, Skt *kalyāṇa-mitra*): a 'good friend' in the sense of a virtuous and wise friend who can guide one well.

spiritual nobility: the state of one of the >noble ones.

Śrāvaka-yāna (Skt): 'Vehicle of the Disciples': a Mahāyāna term for followers of non-Mahāyāna schools: those who follow the Buddha's teachings so as to be able to become >disciples. The >'Hīnayāna' is said to consist of the Śrāvaka-yāna and those who aim to become >solitary-buddhas (see MI.3, M.1, 11, 22, 46, 65, 66, 67, 100, 108, 145, 152, 153 and V.1, 70).

storehouse consciousness (Skt *ālaya-vijñāna*): in the >Yogācāra school, the deepest layer of the mind, which stores the seeds of past good and bad karma, as well as seeds of bright potential, which then have a fundamentally shaping effect on experience.

stream-enterer (P *sotāpanna*, Skt *srotāpanna*): first grade of spiritual nobility, attained by the first glimpse of >nirvana (see Th.201–02). See also >noble ones.

stūpa (Skt; P *thūpa*): a relic-mound, containing >relics of the Buddha or other liberated person. Developed various elaborate styles. Also known as a *pagoda*, a *dāgoba,* or a *chorten* (Tibet) (see Th.94).

suchness (Skt *tathatā*): the true nature of reality, as-it-is-ness.

suffering: see >*dukkha.*

supernormal powers (P *iddhi*, Skt *ṛddhi*): meditation-based psychic powers (L.35 and Th.48 and 141).

sutta (P; Skt *sūtra*): a discourse attributed to the Buddha, or a similar teaching taught by a disciple of his and approved of by him (see LI.6, ThI.2–3, MI.1, 3–7, VI.1, 3, 6).

tantra (Skt): a 'system' of meditation and ritual, preserved in a text (also called a *tantra*) used in >Vajrayāna Buddhism (see VI.1, 3–4 and 6, V.6, 10, 40). There are various classes of *tantra* texts: *kriyā, caryā* and *yoga tantras* are 'external' *tantras* – systems of practice structured around the idea of 'approaching' and emulating an archetypal Buddha. *Mahā-yoga* and *Anu-yoga* are two higher classes of *tantra*, known as 'internal' ones, with *Ati-yoga* or >*Dzogchen* being the third and highest. These three together are also known as *Anuttarayoga tantras*.

Tathāgata (P & Skt): lit. 'Thus-gone' or 'Thus-come', one attuned to reality. An epithet of the Buddha or, sometimes, an >*arahant* (see LI.4, L.20, Th.10).

Tathāgata-garbha (Skt): 'womb/embryo of the Thus-gone': the potential for Buddhahood in all beings, sometimes seen as an inner reality of Buddhahood that just needs to have obscuring >defilements removed from it (see M.12–13, 112, V.1). See >Buddha-nature, which is used in this work as the loose translation of *Tathāgata-garbha.*

Theravāda (P): the 'Ancient teaching' or 'Way of the Elders' school, found mainly in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. The

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only one of the ancient pre-Mahāyāna schools to survive today (see GI.4, 8, 9, SI.2, ThI, MI.3).

Theravādin (P): a follower of the Theravāda school.

thirty-two characteristics of a great man: features of a Buddha's body marking him out for greatness see L.38 and > Wheel-turning monarch.

Three 'bodies' (Skt *Tri-kāya*) of a Buddha: a teaching on the nature of Buddhahood (see M.10–13 and V.2–3): i) the >Dharma-body, which is the ultimate nature of reality, ii) the >Enjoyment-body, i.e. a heavenly Buddha, iii the >Emanation-body, a Buddha manifested on earth.

Three Jewels (P *Tiratana*, Skt *Triratna*): the >Three Refuges as inspiring treasures.

Three Refuges (P *tisaraṇa*, Skt *trisaraṇa*): the Buddha, >*Dhamma* and (Noble) >Sangha as uplifting objects of devotion (see L.60, Th.93, 110, M.49–54, 85 and V.27-9).

three realms (P *tidhātu*, Skt *tridhātu*): the three levels of reality within >*saṃsāra* (cf. Th.164): the realm of >sensual pleasures (*kāma-dhātu*), which includes the worlds of the hells, >hungry ghosts, animals, humans and lower >gods such as >Sakka; the realm of pure/elemental/subtle >form (*rūpa-dhātu*), which includes sixteen subtle heavens of gods such as >Brahmā, and the >formless realm (*arūpa-dhātu*) four purely mental worlds. The phase 'three realms' is often a way of referring to the conditioned world of *saṃsāra* as a whole.

Tiantai (Ch, Jp Tendai): a school of Eastern Buddhism which emphasizes the ideas of the >*Lotus Sūtra* and the Buddha-nature (see MI.6, and M.119, 123).

Truths of the Noble Ones (P *ariya-sacca*, Skt *ārya-satya*): four key truths/realities known to an *ariya* (>noble) person (partially or fully liberated person): i) >*dukkha*, ii) the key condition for its arising, i.e. >craving, iii) its cessation, from the end of craving, iv) the path to its cessation, the >noble eightfold path. *Ariya-sacca* is more usually translated as 'Noble Truth', but this would more apply to the teachings *about* the four *ariya-saccas* (see Th.149–55).

Tsongkhapa (1357–1419): founder of the Tibetan >Gelukpa school (see VI.5 and V.40).

undetermined issues (P *avyākata*, Skt *avyākṛta*): topics on which the Buddha declared no view, and accepted none of the standard list of logical possibilities: whether the world is eternal or not, or finite or not, whether the life principle is the same as the mortal body or not, and whether an awakened person after death can rightly be said to 'be', 'not be', 'both be and not be', or 'neither be nor not be' (see Th.10, 20).

unfavourable circumstances, the eight: situations unfavourable to knowledge of the Dharma: in hell; as an animal; as a hungry ghost; as a god with a long lifespan; in a place where the Dharma is not available; as a person with an inclination towards non-Buddhist views; being without the mental capacity to understand the Dharma; living at a time when the Dharma is not available (see V.14).

unwholesome/unskilful (P *akusala*, Skt *akuśala*): a description applied to a bad action or state of mind, as it one that arises from greed, hatred or delusion, brings suffering to beings, and moves a person away from liberation (see Th.102).

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Vajravārāhi: the 'Vajra Sow', one of the aspects of Vajrayoginī, a female Tantric deity.

Vajrayāna (Skt): 'Diamond vehicle' or 'Thunderbolt vehicle' form of Mahāyāna, dominant in Tibet, Mongolia and Bhutan, which emphasizes the direct attainment of awakening, even in the present life, through special means of identifying with the Buddha-nature already within oneself, including visualization of an awakened being with mantra recitation. (see GI.5, 8, 9, SI.2, MI.7, VI).

Vasubandhu: fourth century CE monk. Author of a number of works of the Mahāyāna >Yogācāra school (see MI.5, VI.6, V.64, 76). Probably the same person as the Vasubandhu who previously wrote the *Abhidharma-kośa*, a key text of the >Sarvāstivāda school.

view on personality (P *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, Skt *satkāya-dṛṣṭi*): any view which takes one or other of the five >categories of existence as being a permanent >Self, belonging to Self, in Self, or containing Self.

vigour (P *viriya*, Skt *vīrya*): the spiritual quality of 'get to it and keep at it' – energy, effort, mental strength, perseverance. One of the >perfections and >faculties.

vinaya (P & Skt): the monastic discipline, including a code of rules of personal conduct, and rules on how to conduct monastic business. The texts containing these (see GI.7, LI.6, SI, ThI.2, 3, MI.4, 6, 7, and VI.6).

vipassanā (P, Skt *vipaśyanā*): 'insight' and a type of meditation which develops it (see Th.132, 138, M.121–23), especially focused on impermanence, >*dukkha* and >non-Self. See also >special insight.

volition (P & Skt *cetanā*): the willing or intention expressed in any action of body, speech or mind, identified in Th.64 with action (karma) itself.

volitional activities (P *saṅkhārā*, Skt *saṃskārā*): fourth of the five >categories of existence. The most important one is >volition or will (which generates karmic results). The term also refers, in more or less the same sense, to the second of the links in >dependent arising, where it sometimes translated as 'karma formations'. In a wider sense, the term *saṅkhārā*/*saṃskārā* also refers to states condition*ed* by karma or any other conditioning factors.

way of being (P & Skt *bhava*): a mode of existence and action shaped by the nature of a person's grasping, and leading on to their next rebirth. Sometimes translated as 'becoming'.

Wheel-turning monarch (P *Cakkavatti*, Skt *Cakravartin*): a compassionate and just emperor. Seen as a secular parallel to a Buddha. Both are said to be born with the >thirty-two characteristics of a great man' (see L.38) on their body, as was the case with >Gotama (see LI.5, L.38, 65, Th.61, 213, 228, V.13).

wholesome/skilful (*kusala* (P; Skt *kuśala*): a description applied to a good action or state of mind, as it arises from generosity, good-will or wisdom, harms no beings, and moves a person towards liberation (see Th.102, 111, V.41).

wholesome roots (P *kusala-mūla*, Skt *kuśala-mūla*): generosity (literally non-greed), good-will (non-hatred) and wisdom (non-delusion) as the roots of >wholesome action.

wisdom (P *paññā*, Skt *prajñā*): understanding, based on hearing/read-

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ing, then reflection, then meditation; at its deepest level, liberating insight (see Th.98, 143–48, M.129 and V.71–3).

world-system (P & Skt *loka-dhātu*): a single world-system is something like a solar system, seen to extend as far as the moon and the sun move in their course and illuminate. There are also: clusters of 1000 of these; galactic clusters of 1000 of these clusters; and super-galactic clusters of 1000 of these galactic clusters (Th.62).

yakṣa (Skt; P *yakkha*): a spirit-being of an often troublesome nature (see Th.5 and M.14, 68, 96, 108, 153).

Yogācāra (Skt): 'Conduct of Yoga' school: a Mahāyāna philosophical school whose key idea is that the world, or at least the world as we know it, is nothing but a mental projection (see M.142–43). Also known as Cittamātra, 'Mind-only' school.

Zen (Jp): see >Chan.

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INDEX

Where a term appears in two forms, separated by/, e.g. Dhamma/Dharma, the first form is in Pāli and the second in Sanskrit

abhidhamma/abhidharma, 18, 19, 34, 39, **555**
Abhidharmakośa, 394
accomplishments, tantric, 179, 527, 529, 532, 534, **555**
acquisitions, 50, 70, 105, 108, 154, 490, **555**
act with immediate bad karmic consequences, 205, 209, 247, 477, **555**
Ādibuddha, 147
āgamas, 19, 29, 33, **555**
ageing, sickness and death, 47, 48, 49, 65, **235–39**, **249–55**
Aggañña Sutta, 123, 195
Akṣobhya Buddha, 144, 145
Alagaddūpama Sutta, 161, 162, 235, 421, 497
Āḷāra Kālāma, 10, 52, 71
alcohol/intoxicants, 42, 183, 190, 192, 201, 203, **309**, 311, 319, 321, 336, 338, 353
Amitābha Buddha, 30, 33, 38, 144, 146, 147, **374**, 466, **474**, 475, 477, 533, 534, 555
Amoghasiddhi Buddha, 144, 146, 147
Ānanda, 12, 42, 109, 112, 115, 116, 120, 121, 415, 490, **505**, **508**, **509**, 510, **519**
Ananta-mukha-pariśodhana-nirdeśa, 169, 280
Anāthapiṇḍika, 12, 265, 516
anattā/anātman. *See* non-Self
anger, 88, 91, 92, 125, 148, 176, 185, **188**, 205, 228, 275, **313**, 327, **337**, 344, 498, 525
Aṅgulimāla, 8, 95–98, 242
animals, 21, 95, 101, 105, **150**, 168, 184, 186, 195, 211, 221, 223, **224**, **241**, 246, **248**, 252, 275, 315, 316, 320, 322, **324**, 332, 341, 390, 396, 397, 476, 492, 513, 531, 569
annihilationism, 421, 422, 466, 467, 563
Anuruddha, 12, 121, 505
Anu-yoga, 36, 401, 568
Apadāna, 17, 123, 198
arahant/arhants, 7, 22, 23, 24, 67, 72, 77, 87, 118, 124, 126, 127, 194, 198, 263, 264, 269, 353, 405, 411, 461, 465, 491, 492, 493, **495–97**, 505, 506, 507, 509, 510, 513, **505–15**, 515, 555
 Mahāyāna on, 26, 27, 130, 134, 135, 138, 272, 273, 282, 287, 374, 424, 443, 466, 467, 468, 470, 475, 478
Ariya-pariyesana Sutta, 51, 53, 55, 65, 71, 74, 154
arrogance, 92, 149, 168, 288, 333, 338, 444
Ārya-satyaka-parivarta, 205, 541
Asaṅga, 31, 40, 372, 534, 551, 552, **555**
asceticism, 7, 10, 55–60, 75, 563
Asita, 46
Asoka/Aśoka, King, 5, 12, 154, **555**
Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, 27, 30, 137, 217, 275, 287, 291, 437, 471, 519, 541, 552
Atiśa, 37, 40, **174**, 294, 297, 303, 347, 533, 548, 551, **555**
Ati-yoga, 36, 558
attention, **354–56**, 370, **404**, 412, **413**, **426**, **555**
Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, 38, 221, **275–76**, 342, 433, **556**, 558
Avataṃsaka Sūtra, 31, 32, 34, 39, 240, 270, 273, 279, 287, 288, 324, 335, 447, 458, 471, 541, 551
awakening (*bodhi*), 3, 6, 7, 12, **14**, 23, 24, 53, 57, 60, **61–65**, 74, 76, 112, 120, 121, 126, 129, 132, 141, 197, 271, 276, 287, 294, 298, 301, 327, 334, 354, 433, 435, 437, 450,

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466, **472**, 492, 519, 522, 527, **556**, *See* Buddhahood
seat of, 134, 166, 293, 332, 385, 386, 473, 527
seeds of, 329
sudden and gradual, 387
awakening-mind (*bodhi-citta*), **24**, 25, 167, 217, 249, **287–88**, **297–302**, 324, 334, 347, 398, **466**, 472, 503, **556**
arousing of, **174–75**, 288, 303
engagement with, **175–76**
bardo, 145, **561**
Bequeathed Teaching *Sūtra*, 32, 501
bhikkhu. *See* monks
Biography of Milarepa, Great Lord of Yogis, 250, 547
birth and death, 7, 9, 22, 44, **50**, 63, 64, 65, 81, 145, 155, 168, 252, 253, 260, 289, 334, **405**, 406, **411**, **416**, **452**, 453, 454, 463, 479, 497, 528, 532, *See saṃsāra*
Blessed One (*Bhagavā*), **8**, 42, 68, 122, 123, 129, 556
Bodhicaryāvatāra, 30, 205, 245, 247, 296, 297, 299, 344, 347, 393, 396, 460, 479, 541, 542, 550, 551, 567, *See* Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening
bodhi-citta, 294, *See* awakening-mind
Bodhidharma, 33, 524, 556
bodhisatta, **14**, 42, 50, 51, **124**, **556**
acts and qualities of, 87
perfections of, 17, 124
bodhisattva path, **4**, 23, 25, 135, 170, 466, 565
as for heroic few in Theravāda, 23, 27
Bodhisattva-bhūmi, 206, 542, 552, *See* Stages of the *Bodhisattva*
Bodhisattva-piṭaka, 169, 344, 542, 551
bodhisattvas, 14, 136, 138, **280–84**, **556**
advanced, 138, 471
and *arhants*, 27, 28, 282
and Buddha-families, 144
and Buddha-nature, 140
and disciples and solitary-buddhas, 26, 36
compassion of, 24, **288**, 289, 290, 300, 326
heavenly, 275
householder, 272, 318, 325, 498, 525
in hell, 205, 241, 244, 289, 332, 466
irreversible, 241, 271, 471, 475
monastic, **498**
perfections of. *See* perfections
precepts of, 335–38
stages of, 25, 179, 210, 281, 300, 466
vows of, 16, 36, 175, 204, 243, 281, 289, 300, **333**, 338, 343, 475
Bodhisattva-yāna, 26
Bodhi-tree, 11, 12, 31, 334, 482
bowing, 27, 95, 131, 132, 198, 303, 334
Brahmā and *brahmās*, 14, 22, 42, 79, 283, 358, 482, 491, 556
Brahmā Sahampati, 12, 66, 70, 121
Brahmā's Net *Sūtra*, 32, 211, 320, 323, 325, 335, 338, 542
Brahma-jāla Sutta, 155, 157
Brahmanism, 6
brahmavihāras, 358. *See* limitless qualities
brahmins, **6**, 42, 79, 87, 89, 91, 93, 105, 182, 184, 186, 192, **193**, **195**, 196, 199, 200, 201, 226, 243, 307, **556**, **557**
brightly shining mind, **351**, 359, **372**, **556**
Buddha Pronounces the *Sūtra* of Neither Increase Nor Decrease, 373, 542
Buddha, meaning and referents of the term, **3**, **7–8**, **557**
Buddha, perfectly awakened, 3, 7, 8, 23, 24, 25, 65, 67, 69, 72, 73, 85, 122, 126, 170, 280, 298, 468, 472, 474, 491, 557
Buddha, the
and animals, 95, 101
and *arahants*, 69, 126
and Dhamma/Dharma, 122–23
and light, 42, 44, 69, 76

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as a refuge, 108, 130, 273, 445, *See* Three Refuges
as unconditioned, 135
biographies of, **12–14**
dates of, 5–6
epithets of, 8–9, 129
last words of, 120
manifestations of, 138
qualities of, 86, 122
recollection of, 357
speech of, 91
Buddha-families, five, 144–46, 148
Buddha-fields, 8, **27**, 167, 175, 176, 239, 276, 283, 288, 316, **330**, 332, 375
Amitābha's, 475, 478
Buddhaghosa, **20**, 23, 351, 358, 541, **557**
Buddhahood, 4, 17, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 36, 38, 124, 130, 134, 141, 142, 148, 177, 246, 251, 273, 274, 302, 330, 393, 466, 468, 470, 471, 472–75, 476, 481, 520, *See* awakening (*bodhi*)
attained long ago, 134
in this life, 445
innate, 40
potential for, 138
seed of, 335
within all, 138
Buddha-images, 87, 212, 271
Buddha-nature, 27, 35, 36, 141–42, 142, 143, 242, 246, 351, **373**, 385, **442**, 444, **449**, 519, 520, **557**, *See Tathāgata-garbha*
those cut off from, 142
Buddhas exist one at a time, 85
Buddhas, celestial, 8, 132, 134, 136, 533, *See* Akṣobhya; Amitābha; Amoghasiddhi; Ratnasambhava; Vairocana Buddhas
Buddhas, past, 13, 65, 124
Buddha-vaṃsa, 17, 124
Cakkavatti/Cakravartin. See Wheel-turning monarch
*cakra*s, 392, 528, 534, 535
Cakrasaṃvara, 530, 536, 557
calm abiding. *See samatha/śamatha*
Caṅkī Sutta, 165, 261
Canon, Chinese, 19, 29, 33–34
Canon, Pāli, 12, **17**, 19, 20, 29, 33, 124, 539, 553
Canon, Sanskrit, 19
Canon, Tibetan, 19, 33, 34, 38–40
care for the sick, 39, 103, 213, 215, 301, 322, **323**
categories of existence (*khandha/skandha*), 75, 128, 129, 167, 178, 240, 363, 376, 399, 405, 406, **407–8**, 409, **418**, 423, 433, 444, 445, 453, 454, 464, 467, 492, 512, **557**
celibacy, 16, 37, 47, 176, 179, 311, 336, **487**, 493, 494, 498, 502, 515, 526
cessation of perception and feeling, 121, 129, **370**, 371, 379
Chan school, 32, 33, **383–89**, 518, 519, **557**
chanting, 19, 23, 33, 122, 153, 262, **263–66**, 275, 309, 312, 491, 509, 518, **537**, *See* recitation
Citta, 12, 516
Cittamātra school, 457, 458, *See* Yogācāra
classes, four social, 6, 31, 193, **194**, **557**
compassion, 137, 192, **220–21**, **557**, *See bodhisattva*s, compassion of; limitless qualities
a Buddha's, 171, 271, 273
and awakening-mind, 288, 298, 329
and vegetarianism, 320
cultivation of, **216**
for animals, 324
in Mahāyāna, 4, **24**, 25, 169, 280, 285, 288, 317, 318, 323, 325, 334, 374, 466
in Theravāda, 23, 27, 77, 228, 305, 310, 315
in Vajrayāna, 143, 144, 149, 248, 396
of a good king, 203, 204, **212–16**
of Avalokiteśvara, 275
of Brahmā, 14, 417
the Buddha's, 67, 71, 78, 84, 97, 102, 103, 112, 116, 130, 132, 293
conceit, 93, 156, 229, 312, 356, **492**, 496, 497, 508, *See* pride

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concentration. *See* meditative concentration
confession, 95, 175, 210, 306, 333, 338, 432, 533
Confessional *Samādhi* of the Lotus *Sūtra*, 32, 383, 542
conscience, 292, 358, 500, 517
consciousness, 369, **557**, 559, *See* categories of existence
and nirvana, 464, 465
and rebirth, 253, 413, 415, 453
as a category of existence, **408**
as like an illusion, 424
as non-Self, 419, 423, 467, 492, 496
in dependent arising, 411, 412, **425**, 452
sensory, **156**, 399, 414
sphere of infinite, 22, 121, 370, 463
contentment, 11, 20, 60, 75, 88, 99, **100**, 106, **193**, 203, 266, 283, 312, 318, 321, 340, 376, 406, 464, 465, 498, 500, 504, 522
council, first Buddhist, 4, 18, 508
council, second Buddhist, 12
craving, 22, 49, 60, 74, **75**, 189, **356**, **405**, 414, 487, **557**, 561
and quarrels, 157
and rebirth, 222, 415, 453, 486
cessation of, 22, 64, 70, 72, 74, 75, **406**, 423, 463
fires of, 264
in dependent arising, **410**, 412, 425, 453
lack of, 48, 411, 493, 497
of ghosts, 246
Cunda, 113, 114
ḍākinīs. *See* sky-dancers
Dalai Lamas, 38, 40, 398, 550, **558**
Daśa-bhūmika Sūtra, 31, 552
death. *See* birth and death; ageing, sickness and death
deathless, nirvana as the, 10, 50, 65, 71, 73, 74, 122, 258, 264, 358, 462, 463, 464, 507
Deer Park, 72, 75
defilements, 7, 25, 50, 63, 65, 82, 129, 133, 134, 146, 149, 177, 263, **266**, 300, 303, **351**, **356**, 367, 425, 442, 453, 454, 471, 491, 500, **558**
and Buddha-nature, 138, 139, 140, 442, 446, 559
and nirvana, 50, 462
antidotes to, 304, **354–56**, 371, **392–94**, 404, 503
in Vajrayāna, 36, 145, 147, 148
delusion, 3, 15, 21, 23, 163, 164, 266, 305, **354**, 388, **393**, 431, **451**, 461, **462**, *See* ignorance; defilements
demi-gods (*asuras*), 46, 150, 188, 221, 223, 246, 476, 478, **558**
dependent arising, 12, 70, 154, 393, **410–17**, 417, **425–28**, 440, 449, **451–54**, **558**
and emptiness, 434
as middle way, 279–80, 421, 434
Devadatta, 94, 95, 293
devas. *See* gods
Dhamma/Dharma, 2, **3**, 7, 18, 23, 52, 73, 77, 82, 108, 110, 111, 113, 116, **153**, 161, 172, 224, 246, 247, 248, 308, 317, 337, 338, 340, 347, 485, **558**
and dependent arising, 415, 427
and the Buddha, 122–23, 427
as a refuge, 109, 110, 255, 262, **272–74**, 294, 309, *See* Three Refuges
as ethical principles, 182, 193, 215
as natural order, 182
as profound, 70, 154, 164, 470
chanting of, 263–66
faith in, 262, 291, 493, *See* Three Refuges
honoured by the Buddha, 66
qualities of, 84, 153
recollection of, 357
Dhamma/Dharma-body, 558
in Mahāyāna, 37, 131, 136–38, 141, 424
in Theravāda, 12, 13, **123**
in Vajrayāna, 143
Dhamma/Dharma-eye, 74, 82, 495, 503
Dhamma/Dharma-follower, 261
dhamma/dharmas, 18, 74, 123, 136, 153, 415, 424, 454, 455, **558**, *See* phenomena

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and Dhamma/Dharma, 359, 415
and nirvana, 471
Dhamma/Dharma-wheel, 12, 75, 76, 166
three turnings of, 28, 35
Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta, 77
Dhammapada, 17, 20, 64, 78, 80, 81, 126, 162, 189, 193, 224, 226, 234, 242, 258, 259, 260, 307, 308, 313, 315, 341, 342, 344, 349, 354, 357, 403, 463, 488, 539, 540, 541
Dhammapada commentary, 20
dhāraṇīs, 271, 283, 434, 525, **558**
Dharmaguptaka monastic code, 16
dhyāna. *See* meditative absorptions
Dīpaṅkara/Dīpaṃkara Buddha, 13, 134
disciples, noble, 7, 15, 22, 23, 126, 405, 491–95, 558
Mahāyāna on, 26, 28, 280–84
dreams, 8, 9, 11, 28, 535
dualism and non-dualism, 30, 149, 150, 245, 279, 386, 388, 389, 399, 401, 437, 439, 472, 478
dukkha/duḥkha (suffering, pain, the painful, painful, unsatisfactory), 11, 74, **75**, 250–56, 268, 403, **405**, 408, **409**, 411, 558
Dzogchen, **36**, 38, 40, 143, 147, 149, 400, 401, **558**, *See* Great Completion
Eastern Buddhism, **4**, 16, 559
elements, eighteen, **167**, 178, 240, 283, 382, 433
elements, four, 127, **245**, 254, **361**, 369, 376, 378, **408**, 412, 423, 431, 432, 456, 463, 506, **559**
elements, six, 454, **559**
Emanation-body, **37**, **136**, 143, 402, **559**
empathetic joy, 397, 559, *See* limitless qualities
empowerment, 179, 293, 340, 528, 529, **559**
emptiness meditation, 129, 381, 391, 456–60
emptiness of fixed form, 449
emptiness of inherent nature/inherent existence, 29, 35, 141, 166, 178, 220, 241, 249, 300, 304, 347, 382, 389, 400, **433–39**, 439, 454, 479, **559**
emptiness of nirvana, 29, 284, 424, 438, 444, 559
emptiness of subject-object duality, 30, **439**, 559
emptiness, radiant, 37, 143, 401
empty of defilements, 29, 31, 140, 442
empty of fixed form, 32, 446, 449
empty of inherent nature/inherent existence, 29, 279, 318, 327, 381, 433, 434, 435, 437, 455, 459, 559
empty of Self, 374, 376, 378, **418**, 424, 559, 567
Engaging in the Conduct for Awakening, 30, 247, 296, 298, 299, 301, 302, 344, 346, 347, 393, 396, 459, 460, 479, 542, 547, 550, 551, *See Bodhicaryāvatāra*
Enjoyment-body Buddhas, **136**, 143, 144, 145, 147, 402, **559**
enlightenment, 3, *See* awakening
envy, 130, 146, 176, 187, 358, 392, **393**, 398
eons, 7, 36, 63, 132, 134, 135, 207, **225**, 271, 285, 290, 301, **332**, 335, 391, 447, 474, 476, 499, 508, 557, 559
equanimity, 507, 518, **559**, 562
as a factor of awakening, 103, 364, 367
as a limitless quality, 57, 106, 137, 312, 331, 358, **394**, 497
as a perfection, 124
in meditative absorption, 11, 62, 366, 368
eternalism, 421, 466, 467, 563
ethical discipline, 21, 22, 66, 87, 88, 112, 165, 190, 191, 201, 232, 260, **266**, **269**, 292, 303, **309–12**, 316, **318–21**, 322, 374, 403, 461, 493, 517, 542, 546, **559**, *See* noble eightfold path and wisdom, 404
as a perfection, 25, 124, 129, 325, 326, 327, 341–43, 565
factors of awakening, seven, 103, 112, 352, 364, **366–67**, 410

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faculties, five spiritual, 53, 54, 60, 80, 112, **261**, 488, 560
faith, 8, 71, 83, 86, 88, 120, 123, 175, 191, 200, 232, 246, 247, 260, **261–62**, 262, 263, **270–72**, 274, **291–94**, 316, 380, 388, 398, 413, 466, 505, 532, **560**, *See* faculties, five spiritual
and healing, 104
and knowledge, 516
empty type of, 164
in Amitābha, 30, 33, 474, 477
in Dhamma/Dharma, 493
in karma, 242, 317
in the *Lotus Sūtra*, 32
in the Sangha, 507, 516
faith-follower, 261
Fazang, 32, 449, 546
feeling, 90, 267, 407, 408, 411, 412, 423, 452, **560**, *See* categories of existence
and karma, 230, 233
cessation of, 121, 129, 370, 371, 379
from sensory contact, 156, 411
mindfulness of, 45, 268, **359**, **362**, 364, 366
neutral, 62, 369
response to, 414, 493
fishing, 21, 105, 218, 341
Flower-array *Sūtra*, 175, 295, *See Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*
formless (*arūpa*) realm, 22, 242, 281, 376, **415**, 492, 526, 560, *See* three realms
formless states, 10, 52–55, 120
Fortunate One, 122, 123, 560
four means of drawing together harmoniously, 88, 200, 342, 517, 563
fraternities, monastic, 3, 4, 16, 24, 28
freedom from characteristics (*animitta*), 166, 167, 168, 284, 381, 387, 438, 444, 523
friendliness, 486, 490
friends, 187, 190, 193, 198, **199**, 202, 203, 216, 338, 390, 394, 395, 397, 503, 507
spiritual, 15, 130, 167, 189, 190, 221, 244, 256, **259–61**, 270, 271, 283, 285, **286**, 288, **295**, 384, 488, 507, 532, **568**
Gampopa, 37, 40, **141**, 216, 548
Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra, 31, 32, 169, 175, 286, 447, 542, 552, *See* Flower-array *Sūtra*
gateways to liberation, three, 381. *See* freedom from characteristics
Gelukpa school, 36, 37, 38, 40, 303, 398, 527, 547, 550, 554, 558, **560**
gender equality, 196–98, 206–7, 510
generation and completion stages, 530, 532, **560**
generosity, 22, 87, 88, 164, 165, 167, 189, 191, 203, 206, 210, **241**, 281, 290, 292, 300, 305, **307–9**, **316–18**, 324, 325, 340, **339–41**, 485, 517, 563
as a perfection, 25, 124, 303, 326, 328, 435
God idea, 1, 15, 21, 226, 230, **417**, **428–30**
goddesses, 206
gods (*devas*), 6, 22, 28, 42, 43, 44, 46, 59, 67, 77, 78, 81, 84, 112, 123, 129, 166, 187, 188, 211, 224, 225, 232, 247, 263, 265, 281, 283, 341, **417**, 426, 463, 491, 497, 516, 517, 518, 556, **560**, 569, *See* Brahmā and *brahmās*; heavens; Sakka
in Brahmanism, 6
taught by the Buddha, 8
going forth, 51, 52, 92, 100, 119, 183, 377, 495, 513, 514
Gotama Buddha, 3, 9, 13, 23, 47, 123, 194, 418, 493, 508
Gotama, Siddhattha, 1, 7, 560
great bliss, 256, 376, 377, 399, 531, 532, 560
Great Calm and Insight, 380, 546
Great Completion, 40, 143, 149, 400, 401, 548, *See Dzogchen*
Great Vehicle, 4, 26, 142, 526, *See* Mahāyāna
gurus, **16**, 36, 37, 145, 179, 248, 257, **294**, 398, 400, 459, 501, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 559, **560**

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Hatthaka of Āḷavī, 516, 517
Heart Sūtra, 433, 542
heavens, 14, 17, **22**, 42, 46, 47, 63, 77, 82, 87, 115, 136, 148, 184, 200, 220, 226, **228**, 233, 415, 446, 461, 491, 569, *See bodhisattvas*, heavenly; Buddhas, celestial; gods (*devas*); Pure Lands
limitations of, 80, 206, 264, 327, 351, 378, 466, 492
of other world-systems, 225, 446
Tusita/Tuṣita/Contented, 42, 482
hells, **21**, 63, 96, 148, 149, 168, 211, 223, 227, **228**, 231, 233, 242, 246, 247, 249, 251, 276, 283, 286, 343, 397, 476, 492, 493, 499, 513, 546, 555, **560**, 562, 569, *See bodhisattvas*: in hell
some past mothers in, 220
higher knowledge, 11, 53, 73, 77, 103, 112, 119, 126, 137, 155, 163, **177**, 329, 333, 357, **369**, 410, 497, 505, 512, 525, 530, **561**
Hīnayāna, 26, 35, 38, 216, 294, 338, **561**
hindrances, five, 165, 261, 268, **351**, 352, 357, 359, **363**, **367**
and ignorance, 413
Huayan school, **32**, 447, 449, 546, **561**
Huineng, **33**, 384, 385, **519**, 561
human rebirth, 21, **224**, 228, **244**, 248, **246–49**, 252, 350, 461, 491
humility, 15, 266, 338, 504
hunger, 60, 78, 90, 238, 251, 254, 301, 332, 346, 408, 513, 532
hungry ghosts, **17**, 21, 149, 168, **211**, 213, 220, 224, 246, 309, 397, 476, 492, **561**
hunting, 204, 322, 324, 341, 531
icchantika, 142, 241, **561**
identity, 148, 149, 296, 353, 410, 415, 422, 455, 489, **561**, 567
craving for an, 410
lack of, 178, 237, 297, 347, 400, 401, 422, 423, **456–60**, 481, *See* non-Self
ignorance, spiritual, 14, 26, 63, 141, 148, 149, 178, **222**, 282, 349, **353**, 356, 376, 380, **411**, **412**, **413**, 414, 415, 425, 433, 438, 443, **452**, 453, 454, 492, 497, **561**
impermanence, 206, **245**, 246, 250, 282, 297, 332, 345, 348, 372, 390, 409, 425, 428, 439, 460, 465, 467, 500, 516, 528, 530
and breathing, 365
and death, **346**
and Māra, 14, 129, 349
and possessions, 317
and solitary-buddhas, 23
and Truths of the Noble Ones, 466
as one of the three characteristics, 166, 318, **376**, 381, **403**, 404, **419**, **424**, 425, 432, 435, 443, 454, 464, 467, 481
of five categories of existence, **418**
of material elements, **245**
of the body, 369, 377
what is beyond, 24
Indra, 36, **46**, 239, 287, 327, 343, 447, **480**, 481, 561, 566, *See* Sakka/Śakra
inherent nature/inherent existence, 561, *See* emptiness of inherent nature/inherent existence
Inscription on the Mind of Faith, 33, 389, 543
intermediate state, 253, *See* bardo
interpenetration, 447, 449, 561
intoxicating inclinations (*āsava/āśrava*), 11, 62, **64**, 69, 124, 127, 250, **266**, **269**, 284, 351, **353**, 437, 452, 462, **492**, 494, 496, 497, 503, **561**
Itivuttaka, 17, 67, 122, 307, 308, 359, 422, 461, 486, 518, 540
Jains, 106
jātaka stories, 13, 17, 20, 34, **124**, 540, 561
jhāna. *See* meditative absorptions
joy, 1, 346, **367**, **410**, 446, 506, 536, *See* empathetic joy; factors of awakening, seven
and devotion, 46, 131, 262, 270, 274, **357**
and lovingkindness, 325
at liberation, 64

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at nirvana, 463
at teachings, 130, 167, 376
from ethical discipline, **266**, 306
in aspiring for nirvana, 141
in meditative absorption, 11, 61, 62, 238, 365, **367**, 368, 369, 461, 516
in nature, 98, 315
of *arahants*, 463
of renunciant life, 498
Kaccāyanagotta Sutta, 417
Kagyupa school, 36, **37**, 172, 347, 548, 549, 554, **562**
Kālacakra Buddha, 533, 535
Kālacakra Tantra, 535
Kālāma Sutta, 164, 223
Kapilavatthu/Kapilavastu, 9
karma, 145, 150, 168, **226**, **408**, 528, **562**, 568,
See act with immediate bad karmic consequences
and character, 231
and determinism, 230
and illness, 230, 397
and nirvana, 463
beneficial, 24, 30, 52, 60, 135, 193, 206, 241, 271, 338, 378, 413, 562
can mature slowly, 233
detrimental, 106, 205, 312, 413, 513
flexible working of, 241
reducing detrimental, 244
karma and rebirth, 11, 21, 222, **223**, **226**, **228**, 232, 236, **240**, 269, 311, **410**, 415, 452
and suicide, 319
knowledge of, 61, **63**
without an unchanging self, 421
karmic benefit (*puñña/puṇya*), 28, 100, 175, 177, 204, 219, **226**, 234, 241, 263, 269, 290, 291, 303, 308, 336, 391, **417**, 477, 498, 500, 521, **562**
field of, 323, 491, 520, 535
sharing of, 25, **210–12**, **309**, 328, 342
Kevaṭṭa Sutta, 84, 465
khandhas. *See* categories of existence
Khemā, 12, 511, 512
Khuddaka-pāṭha, 17, 263, 266, 540
Kisā Gotamī, 81
Kīṭāgiri Sutta, 262, 488, 489
kōans, 33
Koṇḍañña, 77, 495, 505
Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva, 204, 285, 289
Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrva-praṇidhāna Sūtra, 138, 204, 210, 286
Lakkhaṇa Sutta, 89, 311
lamas, 8, 16, 37, 38, 143, 501, 532, 536, See gurus
Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, 30, 33, 241, 246, 320, 373, 440, 445, 460, 521, 543, 551
latent resting state of the mind, 351, 562
latent tendencies, 156, 196, 282, **350**
lay disciples, 9, 12, 15, 111, 485, 493, 515–18, 525–26, 528,
See bodhisattvas, householder; monastic and lay Buddhists
Letter to a Friend, 219, 250, 552
liberation, 22, 23, 25, 61, 64, 65, 66, 126, 140, 145, 148, 153, 170, 177, 273, 281, 282, 343, 357, 359, 370, 381, 401, 479, 492, 497, 530
limitless qualities, four, 137, 283, 287, 312, 331, **358**, **394–98**, **562**
Lives of the Eighty-four *Mahāsiddhas*, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 548
Lotus Sūtra, **26**, 30, 32, 34, 134, 170, 383, **562**, 564, 569,
See Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra
loving kindness, 95, 125, 137, 164, 175, **216–20**, 221, 276, 305, **312–13**, 313, 325, 355, **358–59**, 367, 372, **373–74**, 392, **393**, 394, **395–96**, 486, 517, 519, **562**,
See limitless qualities
as a perfection, 124
of *bodhisattvas*, 290, 300
of Brahmā, 106
the Buddha's, 95
lower realms, 175, 220, 221, 246, 249, 250, 251, 376, 532, **562**
lust, 11, 48, 49, 57, 68, 70, 332, **354**, 392
Madhupiṇḍika Sutta, 122, 156

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Madhyamaka school, 30, 34, 37, 38, 39, 172, 212, 401, 434, 455, 456, 458, 535, 549, 560, **562**
Mahā-kaccāna/Mahā-kātyāyana, 122, 156, 471, 505
Mahā-kassapa/Mahā-kāśyapa, 103, 133, 297, 410, 459, 471, 479, 505, **508**, **518**
Mahāmāyā, 9, 47
Mahāmudrā, 256, 401, 535, 548
Mahā-nidāna Sutta, 157, 414, 416
Mahā-pajāpatī, 9, 47, 123, 198, 510, 512
Mahā-parinibbāna Sutta, 109, 110, 111, 112, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 263, 485, 486
Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra, 30, 32, 34, 133, 134, 136, 244, 372, 444, 543
Mahā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, 170, 245, 271, 277, 278, 318, 328, 379, 381
Mahā-ratnakūṭa/Ratnakūṭa Sūtra, 34, 39, 132, 169, 273, 279, 280, 297, 320, 321, 372, 541, 552
Mahā-saccaka Sutta, 51, 60, 64, 105
Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, 269, 407
mahāsiddhas, 16, 35, 36, 40, 256, **527**, 528, 529, 530, 531, 534, **563**
Mahā-sīhanāda Sutta, 57, 69
Mahāyāna, **4**, 5, 16, **23–34**, 34, 35, 36, 38, 40, 123, 132, 136, 174, 212, 216, 282, 287, 294, 296, 297, 298, 300, 338, 351, 377, 387, 430, 445, 454, 466, 468, 526, 538, 541, 553, 563
Mahāyāna, meaning of, 26
Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra, 31, 219, 296, 543, 551, 552, 555
Mahā-yoga, 36, 568
Maitreya Bodhisattva, 31, 175, 302, 427, **446**, **472**, 519, 533, 534, 535, 536, 563, *See* Metteyya/Maitreya Buddha
Maitreya-nātha, 40
maṇḍala, 147, 399, 536
Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, 174, 176, 248, 249, 286, 302, 373, 374, 430, 431, 432, 438, 439, 471, 533, 534, 535, 536, 563
mantras, 4, 6, **36**, 125, 179, 213, **535**, **563**, *See dhāraṇī*
Mantrayāna, 4, 5, **36**, 179, 563
Manual for Seated Meditation Practice, 33, 383, 384
Māra, 11, **14**, 42, 60, 83, 102, 108, 111, 129, 197, 290, 349, 482, 508, 536, **563**
marriage, 201–2
married priesthood, 16
material form, 128, 370, **407**, 423, 463, 464, 512, **563**, *See* categories of existence
meat-eating, 55, **105**, 113, 319, 320, 338, 531
meditative absorptions (*jhāna/dhyāna*), 11, 22, 53, **61–63**, 81, 120, 177, 178, 269, 283, 300, 303, 304, 344, 352, 365, 366, **367–69**, 369, 370, 378, 379, 390, 410, 478, 498, 505, 507, 512, 516, 517, 518, 533, **563**, 565, 566
and wisdom, **357**
in Chan, 384
meditative concentration (*samādhi*), 36, 53, 66, 264, 266, **269**, 279, 326, 368, 374, 375, 380, **391**, 403, 409, 461, 487, 516, **563**, *See* factors of awakening, seven; faculties, five spiritual; noble eightfold path
free of characteristics, 110, 381
in Chan, 384, 385
memory of past lives, 11, 23, 62, **63**, 68, 79, 222, 506, 507, 512, 518
merit, 226, *See* karmic benefit
Meru. *See* Sumeru/Meru, Mount
Metteyya/Maitreya Buddha, 184, 563, *See* Maitreya Bodhisattva
middle way of practice, 6, 74, **75**, 268, 277, 278, 279, 563
middle way of understanding, 279, 296, 304, **416**, **421**, 434, 457, 479, 562, 563
Milarepa, **37**, 40, **172**, 180, 249, 256, 339, 390, **478**, 547, 549, **563**
Milindapañha, 17, 20, 127, 212, 261, 263, 404, 422, 464, 515, 518, 541, 564
mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*), 411, **412**, 413, 426, 452, 453, 463, 465, **564**
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Song of Parting from the Four Attachments, 249, 549
mindfulness, 1, 42, 57, 61, 86, 91, **109**, 122, 177, 268, 283, 315, 321, 342, **359**, 369, 379, 404, 538, **564**, **567**, *See* factors of awakening, seven; faculties, five spiritual; noble eightfold path
and clear comprehension, 62, 267, 289, 358, 413, 526
and monastic discipline, 487, 499
eight focuses of, 376
four foundations of. *See satipaṭṭhāna*
four Vajrayāna focuses of, 398
in meditative absorption, 11, 63, 162, 367, 378
loss of, 230, 413
of breathing, 61, 360, **364–67**, 372, 394, **564**
of death, 358
of feelings, **362**, 366
of reality-patterns, 149, 363, 366
of the body, 61, **360–62**, 365, **377**, 509
of the mind, 363, 366, 370
mind-made body, 369, 505
mind-reading, 68, 83, 94, 370, 476
Miscellaneous Oral Precepts, 504, 549
Moggallāna/Maudgalyāyana, 12, 103, 210, 505, **507**, **508**
monastic and lay Buddhists, 9, 12, 15, 92, 111, 272, 325, 340, **485**, **498**, 515, 525, 528
monastic discipline, 12, 13, 15, 486–91, 18, 34, 39, 247, 338, 487, **486–91**, **499–501**, 501–4, 509, **570**, *See Vinaya-piṭaka*
monks, 15, 22, 485, 498, **564**, *See* Sangha
foremost, 505
Moon Lamp *Sūtra*, 219, 391, 552
mother of the Buddha, 9, 42, 47
Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā, 30, 178, 296, 297, 435, 456, 479, 480, 535, 543, 551
Nāgārjuna, 30, 40, 178, **212**, 219, 248, 250, 296, 340, **434**, 453, 455, 456, 479, 534, 535, 543, 549, 551, 552, 562, 564
Nāgasena, 17, 422, 464, **564**
Nāḷāgiri, elephant, 8, 95
Nanda, 80, 506
neither-perception-nor-non-perception rebirth, 127
neither-perception-nor-non-perception, sphere of, 10, 22, **54**, 121, 371, 463, 560
Nibbedhika Sutta, 224, 226
Nichiren school, 32, 554, 564
*nikāya*s, the five, 17, 19, 29, 33, 540
nirvana, 8, 10, 50, 55, 62, 65, 95, 438, **461**, **462**, **463**, 490, **564**, *See* deathless
and *arahant*s, 507
and awakening, 53, 65, 75, 103, 126
and consciousness, 464, 465
and Dhamma, 3, 70, 153, 154, 167
and the path, 85, 464
as blissful, 104, 166, 193, 424, 443, 463
as end of craving, 22, 423
as end of *dukkha*, 11, 21, 75, 424
as end of rebirth, 22, 461
as non-Self, 403, 424, 443
as the peaceful, 464
as timeless, 417
as unborn, 65, 74, 463
as unconditioned, 409, 424, 434, 463, 464
final, 6, 12, 30, 67, 87, 109, 111, 115, 116, 117, **121**, 132, 133, 134, 175, 461, 465, 476, 482, 485, 515, **565**
hindrances to experiencing, 352
Mahāyāna on, 25, 26, 29, 30, 133, 134, 148, 170, 171, 178, 279, 282, 297, 332, 427, 434, 438, 439, 450, 452, 454, **466–72**, 472
of non-returners, 492, 494
Vajrayāna on, 400, 401, 479
noble *bodhisattva*s, 25, 179, 300, 326, 466, 565
noble eightfold path, 21, 22, 29, 65, 74, **75**, 112, 118, 260, **268**, **269**, **278**, 309, 406, 412, 427, **564**, 565, *See* middle way of practice

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noble one, discipline of the, 93, 95
noble ones, **22**, 23, 60, 63, 73, **74**, 95, **122**, 140, 166, 243, 262, 264, 269, 292, 307, 321, 352, 357, **405**, 407, 420, 421, 461, 464, 491, **492**, 493, 491–95, 497, 502, 508, 558, **564**, *See* disciples, noble; Truths of the Noble Ones
noble right view/wisdom, 191, 403, 487
noble Sangha, 4, 15, 210, 474, 491, 566, 569
noble search, 49
Noble Truths, 75, *See* Truths of the Noble Ones
non-returners, 22, 66, 87, 269, 272, 287, 313, 470, **491**, 492, 493, 498, 515, 516, 517, 518, **564**, 566
non-self, 297
non-Self, 35, **403**, 404, **418**, 420, 423, 424, 443, **454**, 464, 467, 492, 496, **565**, 567, *See* identity, lack of
Northern Buddhism, 5, 16, 565
nothingness, sphere of, 10, 22, **52**, 53, 71, 121, **370**, **371**, 463, 560 ,
number of Buddhists in the world, 5
nuns, 3, 12, 15, **16**, **17**, 22, 47, 111, 116, 138, 176, 197, **198**, 343, 485, 487, 493, 498, 506, **510**, 513, **565**, *See* Sangha
foremost, 511, 512
Nyingmapa school, **36**, 38, 40, 143, 147, 173, 293, 400, 550, **565**
omniscience, 26, 162, 177, 221, 270, 275, 282, 286, 289, 291, 385, 424, 438, 469, 473, 536
once-returners, 22, **491**, **492**, **565**
One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, 173, 180, 257, 479, 547, 549
Ornament of Clear Realization, 297, 298, 552
Padmasambhava, **36**, 37, 292, 293, 400, 550, 565
painful/the painful. *See dukkha*
Pāli language, 16
Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra, 431, 436, 543
papañca/prapañca, 156
Pasenadi Kosala, King, 12, 97, 187, 194, 197, 204, 419, 512
path. *See bodhisattva* path; noble eightfold path
path of seeing, 25, 300, 466, 564
paths, five, 179, 300, 565
patient acceptance, 25, 124, 137, 169, 179, 183, 188, 203, 266, 303, **313**, 315, 316, **326**, 328, **329**, **344–47**, 424, 431, 525, 526, 565
of profound teachings, 217, 347, 388, 439, 525
Paṭisambhidā-magga, 17, 83, 424, 540
Patrul Rinpoche, 40, 250, 547, 550, **565**
perception, 22, 52, 121, 128, 329, 370, 399, 401, 407, **408**, 418, 419, 420, **424**, 464, 534, **565**, *See* categories of existence
mistaken, 222, 356, 432, 435, 441, 561
perfection of wisdom, **170**, **177**, 274, 290, 296, 328, **331**, 334, 381, 401, 431, **433**, 436, **450**, 454, 469, 471, 508, 519, 525, **566**
Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*s, 29, 34, 35, 39, 541, 542, 543, 546, 552, *See Aṣṭasāhasrikā Sūtra; Heart Sūtra; Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā Sūtra; Vajracchedikā Sūtra; Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*
perfections, 11, **565**
in Mahāyāna, **25**, 29, 34, 137, 166, 276, 283, 286, 294, 300, 318, **326–33**, 378, 425, 435, **436**, **566**, *See* perfection of wisdom
in Theravāda, **17**, 23, 123, **124**, **566**
in Vajrayāna, **303**, 304, **339–48**
Petavatthu, 17, 309, 540
phenomena, 129, 279, 280, 296, 345, 380, 432, 444, 445, *See dhamma/dharma*s
Mahāyāna on, 132, 170, 171, 206, 207, 278, 279, 282, 297, 326, 328, 329, 330, 381, 382, 387, 388, 389, 428, 433, 436, 438, 440, 442, 447, 449, 454, 455, 456, 460, 467, 470, 479, 481, 524

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Theravāda on, 128, 403, 416, 424, 497
Vajrayāna on, 178, 179
phenomena, expanse of (*dharmadhātu*), 141, 143, 144, 147, 148, 150, 168, 334, 373, 401, 460, 473, 529, **560**
Platform *Sūtra* of the Sixth Patriarch, 33, 385, 388, 525, 543, 561
plus supernormal powers, 507
poetry, 40, 102, 107–9, 130, 172, 549, *See Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*
poverty, 184, 185, 186, 214, 251, 333, 376, 377
Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras. *See* Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtras*
Prātimokṣa Sūtra, 502, 549
Pratyutpanna Buddha Saṃmukhāvasthita Samādhi Sūtra, 376, 544
Prayer of the Secret Life of Tsongkhapa, 40, 536, 549
precepts for *bodhisattvas*, 32, 211, 320, 323, 324, **335**, **338**
precepts, eight, 311, 321, 335
precepts, five ethical, 42, 100, 125, 191, 204, 262, 287, 309, 318, 319, 325, 541, 546, **566**
pride, 145, 146, 157, 252, 283, 333, 338, **393**, 503, 527, *See* conceit
divine, 399
pure abodes, 22, 87, 491, 494, 566
Pure Land schools, 33, 477
Pure Lands, 8, 385, **466**, **475–78**, 536, 541, **566**
in Chan, 386, 538
quarrelling, 101, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 187, 238, 239, 276, 320, 410, 486
Rāhula, 9, 47, 305, 505
Rājā Sutta, 122, 262, 492
Ratnagotra-vibhāga, 31, 140, 326, 544, *See Uttaratantra-śāstra*
Ratnasambhava Buddha, 144, 145, 147
Ratnāvalī, 219, 455, 479, *See* The Precious Garland
realm of 'sensual desire' (*kāma*), 22, 46, 247, 281, 376, **415**, 452, 491, 492, 526, *See* three realms
realm of elemental or pure 'form' (*rūpa*), 22, 242, 281, 376, **415**, 492, 526, **560**, *See* three realms
rebirth, 8, 10, 22, 24, 25, 38, 63, 64, 76, 126, 127, 140, 167, 216, **222–24**, 225, **250**, 281, 282, 323, 349, 351, 356, 368, 414, 417, 428, 453, 461, 466, *See* animals; demi-gods; gods; heavens; hells; human rebirth; hungry ghosts; consciouness and rebirth; karma and rebirth; Pure Lands; *saṃsāra*
and identity, 422
and non-Self, 425
meeting kin from past, 235
no beginning to, 234
realms of, 21, 148, 492
recitation, 36, *See* chanting
devotional, **262**, 477
of a blessing, 78
of mantras, 535, 570
of precepts, 309, 335, 502, 511
of texts and verses, 17, 18, 28, **103**, 121, 162, 171, 208, 209, 211, 218, **248**, 277, 339, 341, 346, 382, 500, 508, 519, 520, 522, 523
recollection
of Amitābha Buddha, 374, 477
of Avalokiteśvara, 275
of death, 358
of the Buddha, 9, 130
of the Buddha, Dhamma/Dharma and Sangha, 357, 474
regret, 205, 206, 266, 277, 318, 500
at death, 173, 211, 233, 255, 501, 504
relics, 13, 175, **263**, **274**, 293, **566**, 568
religious tolerance, 155
renunciants, 6, 10, 42, 57, 60, 87, 88, 92, 93, 99, 105, **107**, 118, 119, 158, 163, 184, 192, 193, 194, 199, 200, 201, 230, 266, 307, 309, **325**, 343, 486, **498**, 504, 512, 526, **566**
renunciation, great, 10
rig pa, 37, **143**, 400, 566
right action, 268, 269, 278, 309, *See* noble eightfold path
right effort, 112, 268, 269, 278, *See* noble eightfold path

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right livelihood, 89, 268, 269, 278, **311**, **321**, *See* noble eightfold path
right meditative concentration, 269, *See* meditative concentration; noble eightfold path
right mindfulness, 268, 278, *See* mindfulness; noble eightfold path
right resolve, 268, 269, 309, 403, *See* noble eightfold path
right speech, 88, **268**, 269, 278, 309, **310**, **320**, 335, *See* noble eightfold path
right view, 63, 136, 233, **268**, **269**, **278**, 309, 310, 403, **416**, 425, 467, *See* noble eightfold path
Ri-may movement, 38, 40, 248, 549
sacrifice, Brahmanical, 6, 7, 14, 60, 186, 315
Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra, 135, 172, 276, 469, 544, 552, 562
Sakka/Śakra, 46, 79, 84, 121, 138, 187, 188, 235, 274, 447, 519, **566**, *See* Indra
Śākyamuni Buddha, 7, 134, 430, 527, 536, **566**
Sakyapa school, 36, 37, 40, 248, 249, 536, 549, 566
Śālistamba Sūtra, 29, 427, 428, 452, 453, 544, 552
samaṇas. *See* renunciants
Sāmañña-phala Sutta, 77, 353, 369, 370
Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, 239, 287, 333, 566
Samantabhadra Buddha, **147**, 382, 566
samatha/śamatha meditation, 177, 304, **356**, 357, 359, 364, **367**, 370, 378–80, **566**, *See* meditative absorption
Sambuddha Sutta, 69, 126
Saṃdhi-nirmocana Sūtra, 30, 442, 449, 544
saṃsāra, **22**, 64, 130, 141, 145, 146, 149, 174, 177, 178, **222–24**, 241, 256, 295, 296, 326, 346, 376, 381, 382, 401, 444, 462, 531, **566**, 569, *See* birth and death; rebirth
 as beginningless, 219, 222, 395
 beginingless, 250
 bodhisattvas stay long in, 282, 283
 compassion for beings in, 247, 289, 377
 Mahāyāna on its relationship to nirvana, 29, 140, 297, 379, 382, 434, 438, 452, 471
 perils of, 139, 171, 246, **249–56**, 288, 292, 298, 327, 377, 399, 532
 Vajrayāna on its relationship to nirvana, 148, 400, 401, 479
Sangha, 2, **3**, **15–16**, 104, 166, **566**, *See* Three refuges
 as third refuge, 92, 119, 120, 262, 264, 272, 273, 274, 295, 438, 493
 chanting by, 263
 monastic, 4, 37, 78, 92, 209, 210, 323, 338, 477, **486**, 490, 501, 517, 555
 of *bodhisattvas*, 284
Sangha, noble. *See* noble Sangha
Sanskrit, 6, 7, 19, **27**, 32, 34, 39, 418, **566**
Śāntideva, **30**, 40, 247, 542, 545, 547, **567**
Sāriputta/Śāriputra, 12, 55, 68, 80, 126, 169, 171, 206, 378, 379, 387, 409, 410, 427, 433, 435, 462, 470, 474, **505**, **506**, **507**, 508, 518, 519
Sarvāstivāda school, 13, 16, 19, 457, 502, 549, 567
śāstras, 29, 34, 35, 39, 40, **567**
Śatapañcaśatka-stotra, 29, 131, 544
satipaṭṭhāna, **359–64**, 364, 366, **567**
Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, 364, 392, *See Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*
self and others, 1, 29, 149, 305, 314, 317, 320, 322, 370, 374, 392, 393, 559, 562
self as refuge, 110
self, empirical, 422
self, great, 232, 422
Self/permanent, essential self, 31, 75, 127, 140, 141, 166, 167, 246, 249, 278, 284, 297, 318, 329,

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350, 374, 376, 378, 381, 401, 403, 405, 412, 416, **417–24**, 425, 428, 430, 432, 435, 436, 438, 439, **443**, 444, 445, 454, 467, 472, 474, 492, 528, 563, **567**, *See* non-Self; view on personality
self-agency, 259
self-arising knowledge, 144, 148, 284
self-centredness, 392, See conceit
self-cherishing, 221, 393
self-composure, 487
self-confidence, 99, 137, 255, 287, 474, 525
self-control/discipline/restraint, 15, 79, 132, 137, 167, 201, 215, 258, 265, 331, 504, 525
self-denial, 6, **55**
self-development, 232, 508
self-existence, 388, 441
self-harm, 237, 305
self-identity, 481
self-liberating knowledge, 401
self-mastery, 121
self-mortification/torture, 75, 268, 319
self-production, 456
self-reliance, 15
self-surrender, 307
sense-bases, 178, 240, 283, 406, **411**, **412**, 444, 452, **567**
sensual pleasures, 6, 9, **48**, 75, 105, **161**, 202, 236, 410, 507, **567**
acceptable conduct concerning, 193, 494
and Māra, 60, 290
craving for, 75, 171, 268, 313, 405
disadvantages of, 52, 57, 82, 165, 187, **238**, 377, 512
grasping at, 412
hindrance of desire for, 325, 352, 413, 516
meditative happiness is beyond, 61
of lower heavens, 22, 47, 327
tendency or inclination to attachment to, 350, 351, 353
wrong conduct concerning, 191, 194, 201, 268
siddhas, 341, 400, 460, **567**, *See mahāsiddhas*
Sigāla/Śrīgāla, 198, 321, 322
Sigālovāda Sutta, 29, 200, 203
Sīha, 106
Śikṣā-samuccaya, 30, 271, 290, 325, 430, 544, 567
similes
ancient forest path, 65
appearance of the moon, 133
banana tree, 377, 424, 431
blind men and elephant, 159
bubble, 245, 377, 423, 431
carpenter's peg, 355
cloud, 308, 480, 481, 533
concerning *Tathāgata-garbha*, 138
damp and dry wood, 57
dangerous ocean, 133, 173, 251, 275, 295, 300
dream, 241, 245, 251, 375, 377, 381, 382, 389, 440, 447, 451, 458, 469, 470
drum, 276, 480, 481
extinct fire, 127
ferryman, 25, 289, 295, 302, 471
finger and moon, 26, 28
further shore, 107, 161, 377
gold, 32, 139, 140, 172, 351, 373, 449
handful of leaves, 126
illusion, 245, 377, 424, 445, 451
immeasurable ocean, 127, 128, 512
island of safety, 462
jewel, 46, 130, 139, 144, 248, 261, 264, 265, 303, 444, 480, 482, 497, 499
leprosy, 49
lion's roar, 31, 46, 68, 474, 505
lotus, 71, 81, 124, 239, 326, 368, 471, 482, 488, 489, 496, 535
lute strings, 80
merging rivers, 85
mirage, 136, 296, 377, 424, 431, 439, 440, 445, 451
mirror, 143, 144, 305, 376, 389, 426, 431, 451, 477, 522, 523
moon reflection, 430, 431
net of jewels, 446, 447
poisoned arrow, 159
raft, 107, 161, 170, 295, 377
reed drawn from its sheath, 369

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river flowing to the sea, 495
salt put in a cup of water or a river, 232
seed, 226
silver ore, 142
sky, 297, 400, 451, 480, 508
sun, 482
turtle and floating yoke, 248
wood-turner, 361
wrongly held snake, 161
Siṃsapā Sutta, 126
skandhas. *See* categories of existence
skill in means, 25, 26, 80, 131, 135, 170, 171, 276, 280, 285, 286, 317, 326, 331, 332, 333, 468, 469, 525, **567**
sky-dancers (*ḍākinī*), 145, 146, 527
solitary-buddhas, **7**, 17, 23, 24, 124, 491, **567**
Mahāyāna on, 129, 142, **170**, 241, **280**, 281, 282, 327, 337, 400, 424, 443, 458, 468, 469
solitude, 98, 101, 130, 283, 389, 390, 392, 451, 503, 504
son of good family, 80, 133, 135, **192**, 199, 200, **567**
Soṇa, 79
Southern Buddhism, 4, 16, 568
special insight, 304, 534, 568
spontaneity, 57, 70, 108, 172, 479, 480, 534, 549
Śrāvakabhūmi, 372
Śrāvaka-yāna, 26, 27, 568
Śrīmālā, Queen, 131, 204, 207
Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra, 31, 132, 141, 205, 207, 274, 282, 425, 443, 467, 545
Stages of the *Bodhisattva*, 176, 295, 343, 345, 346, 347, 542, 552, *See Bodhisattva-bhūmi*
step-by-step discourse, 78, 82, **165**, 352, 405
storehouse consciousness, 31, 373, **568**
straightforward mind, 88, 386
stream-enterers, 22, 81, 120, 241, **269**, 272, 287, **491**, 492, 493, 494, 495, 508, **568**
stream-entry, 47, 68, 74, 78, 95, 261, 470, **492**, 507, 510
stūpas, 175, 212, **263**, 342, 566, **568**
Subhadda, 117
Subhūti, 132, 170, 270, 271, 286, 290, 328, 329, 381, 435, 436, 469, 505, 519
suchness, 142, 169, 347, 386, 568
Suddhodana, 9, 46, 47
Sudhana, 31, 286, 446, 447
suffering. *See dukkha*
suicide, 319, 410, 487, 502
Sujātā, 11, 517
Sukhāvatī, 30, 474, 475
Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra, 30, 33, 475, 478, 545
Sumedha, 13
Sumeru/Meru, Mount, 46, 133, 375
supernormal powers, 83, 96, 134, 179, 198, 207, 210, 289, 335, 343, 369, 375, 447, 468, 469, 508, 513, 527, 561, **568**
Sūtra of Forty-two Sections, 32, 206, 278, 545
Sūtra on the Eight Reflections of Great Men, 377, 545
Sūtra on the Importance of Caring for One's Father and Mother, 32, 210, 545
sūtras, Mahāyāna, 24, 26, **27**, **28**, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 39, 208, 338, 347
Sutta-nipāta, 14, 17, 19, 47, 52, 61, 108, 128, 157, 158, 196, 238, 265, 266, 312, 313, 404, 488, 490, 518, 539, 540
suttas, 13, **17**, 19, 20, 27, 28, 109, 539, 564, **568**
tantra meaning, 36
Tantra Showing the Transparency of the Samantabhadra's Buddha Mind, 147, 150, 550
tantras, 4, 33, 34, 35, 39, 40, 179, **304**, 401, 531, 533, 535, 536, 552, 560, **568**
Tantrayāna, 36, 398
Tārā Buddha, 533, 534
Tathāgata, 8, 42, **67**, **68**, 69, 73, 77, 95, 110, 116, 122, 123, 127, 133, 135, 137, 141, 159, 160, 166, 169, 221, 225, 242, 261, 263, 265, 271, 273, 274, 281, 411, 416, 443, 474,

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482, 512, 519, 552, **568**, *See Tathāgata-garbha*
Tathāgata-garbha Sūtra, 31, 545
Tathāgata-garbha/Buddha-nature, 31, 37, **138–41**, 246, 373, **442**, 444, **568**
Tattvasaṅgraha, 172, 549
termas or 'treasure' texts, 37, 38, 40
The Abbreviated Points of the Graded Path, 40, 304, 547
The Baizhang Zen Monastic Regulations, 501
The Flight of the Garuda, 143, 144, 147, 548, 550
The Gateless Gate, 518
The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, 180, 249, 256, 550
The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, 141, 142, 216, 221, 246, 248, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 300, 301, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 392, 393, 394, 451, 454, 456, 460, 480, 481, 482, 547, 548, 550, 560
The Lamp for the Path to Awakening, 180, 548, 555
The Precious Garland, 216, 549, 551, 552, *See Ratnāvalī*
The Six Noumenal and Phenomenal Perfections *Sūtra*, 279, 430
The Song of the Four Mindfulnesses, 40, 400, 550
The Tibetan Book of the Dead, 145, 146, 148, 400, 402, 550, 551
The Words of My Perfect Teacher, 173, 174, 248, 251, 252, 253, 255, 256, 292, 293, 294, 300, 302, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 347, 348, 390, 391, 392, 395, 396, 397, 398, 450, 451, 478, 547, 551
Theragāthā, 17, 47, 79, 410, 497, 508, 509, 539, 540
Theravāda, **4**, 5, **16–23**, 24, 27, 30, 33, 132, 149, 179, 212, 262, 268, 275, 309, 351, 371, 394, 427, 430, 461, 466, 538, 539, 553, **568**
 monastic code of, 16
 nuns in, 510
Therīgāthā, 17, 197, 513, 515, 539, 540
thirty-seven qualities conducive to awakening, 29, 112, 137, 166, 379
thirty-two characteristics of a great man, 8, 9, 87, 89, 123, 134, 139, 272, 331, 375, 444, 469, **569**
three bodies of a Buddha, **136–38**, 143, 144, **569**, *See* Dhamma/Dharma-body; Enjoyment-body; Emanation-body
Three Jewels. *See* Three Refuges
three levels of reality, 440
three realms, 131, 148, 150, 302, 395, 400, 458, 530, **569**, *See* realm of sense-desire, relam of form, and formless realm
Three Refuges, 92, 119, 120, 132, 153, 175, 210, 214, 243, **262**, **263**, **264**, **272–74**, 292, **294–95**, **309**, 319, 321, 330, **337**, 339, 346, 347, 399, 438, 493, 513, 516, 517
 praise and blame of, 155
Tiantai school, 32, 379, 382, **569**
Tibetan Buddhism, 5, *See* Vajrayāna
Titthāyatana Sutta, 230, 412
Tranquillity and Insight Meditation in the Five Teachings of the Huayan, 449, 546
Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna, 317, 380, 381, 546
Treatise on the Golden Lion, 32, 450, 546
Truths of the Noble Ones, four, 11, 21, **22**, 26, 35, 62, 64, 69, 75, **76**, 126, 153, 165, 220, 264, 266, 281, 364, **404–10**, **411**, 413, 415, 434, 435, **466**, 507, 558, 561, 564, **569**
Tsongkhapa, **37**, 40, 303, **532**, 535, 547, 549, 560, 569
tulkus, **37**, 38, *See* Emanation-body
Twenty Stanzas, 457, 552
Udāna, 14, 17, 81, 104, 115, 160, 451, 464, 466, 540
Uddaka Rāmaputta, 10, 54, 71
Ugra-paripṛcchā, 27, 29, 273, 319, 498, 499, 546
Ullambana Sūtra, 32, 211, 546
unconditioned, the, 135, 148, 282,

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284, 403, 409, 424, 425, 428, 434, 438, **462**, 463, **464**, 471, 473
unconscious aspects of mind, 31, 37, 351, 562
undetermined issues, 30, 127, **159**, 418, **569**
unfavourable circumstances, eight, 244, 246, 247, 291, **569**
unwholesome/unskilful actions/states, 137, 141, 154, 157, 173, 176, 183, **185**, 203, 204, 209, 210, 218, 221, 223, 247, 250, 267, 277, 285, 298, 324, 327, 329, 336, 337, 338, 340, 341, 342, **354**, 358, 376, 377, 382, 395, 445, 452, 476, 498, 500, 521, 522, 523, 562, **569**
affective and cognitive, **356**
and ignorance, 413
and karmic results, 241, 242, 243, 244, 285, 292, 319, 397, 452
and right effort, **259**, **268**, 327, **355**
cessation of, 156
meditative absorption as beyond, 49, 62, 238, 269, 368, 516
roots of, **305**, 354
synonyms for, 84, 88, 163, 183, 189, 194, 305
ten courses of, **339**
tendencies to, 350
three levels of, **266**
Upaka, 72
*Upaniṣad*s, 6, 416, 418
Upāsaka-śīla Sūtra, 29, 129, 204, 206, 212, 244, 273, 274, 276, 281, 288, 318, 319, 321, 322, 323, 325, 329, 330, 498, 546
Uppalavaṇṇā, 12, 511, 512
Uttaratantra-śāstra, 142, 480, 481, 482, *See Ratnagota-vibhāga*
Vairocana Buddha, 144, 145, 147, **446**
vajra symbol, 4, 36, 240, 379, 535
Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, 30, 33, 132, 137, 170, 245, 272, 329, 435, 520, 546
Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, 221, 533
Vajrasattva Buddha, 145, 147
Vajravārāhi, 532, 570
Vajrayāna, 3, **4**, 5, 16, 33, **40**, 132, 143, 144, 147, 174, 179, 212, 216, 256, 298, 392, 445, 454, 527, 538, 547, 550, 551, 554, 568, **570**
Varma-vyūha-nirdeśa, 279
Vasubandhu, 31, 40, 394, 457, 534, 543, 552, 555, **570**
vegetarianism. *See* meat eating
Vibhaṅga Sutta, 261, 403
view on personality, 264, 350, **492**, **570**
view, wrong, 63, 133, 135, 171, 194, **223**, 227, 230, 231, 233, 234, 242, 245, 246, 247, 269, 291, 305, 339, 389, 440, 467
views, clinging to, 157, 158, 159, **161**, 166, 279, 296, 353, 412, 561
vigour, 25, 60, 139, 173, 272, **276**, 283, 288, 303, 316, 326, 328, **329**, **347**, **366**, 469, 474, 500, 505, 512, 525, **570**, *See* factors of awakening, seven; faculties, five spiritual; perfections and right effort, **268**
as a basis of success, 112
unbalanced and balanced, 79, 262
Vimalakīrti, **27**, 138, 373, 387, **431**, 439, **525**, 526
Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra, 30, 138, 166, 167, 168, 205, 207, 284, 289, 316, 323, 324, 331, 333, 374, 378, 379, 386, 431, 433, 439, 472, 473, 474, 526, 547
vinaya. *See* monastic discipline
Vinaya-piṭaka, **17**, 18, 77, 80, 82, 95, 101, 104, 107, 411, 487, 488, 491, 496, 507, 509, 511, 540
vipassanā/vipaśyanā meditation, 177, 304, **356**, 357, **359**, 360, 364, 370, 380, **570**
Visākhā, 12, 517
Visuddhimagga, 20, 23, 262, 358, 394, 411, 430, 541, 557
volition, **226**, 310, **407**, 408, 412, 562, **570**
volitional activities, **407**, **408**, 411, 412, **413**, 418, **424**, **452**, 453, 463, 464, **570**, *See* categories of existence
stilling of all, 70

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volitional constructions, 64, 154, 371, 407, 463
vows. *See bodhisattvas*: vows of
vows, clinging to rules and, 350, 412, 492
vows, monastic, 176, 338
way of being (*bhava*), 411, 412, **415**, 453, 454, 463, 489, 490, **570**
 intoxicating inclination to a, 64, 353, 561
Wheel-turning monarch, 9, 87, **182**, 221, 492, 506, 516, 569, **570**
wholesome/skilful actions/states, 87, **88**, 137, 141, 154, 177, 183, 185, 186, 203, 205, 223, 250, 266, 287, 292, 298, 300, 301, 303, 314, 316, 319, 324, 331, 337, 341, 342, 352, 354, 355, 386, 391, 395, 410, 413, 445, 452, 500, 521, **559**, **570**
 aid for, 305
 and karmic results, 242, 243, 244, 247, 251, 292, 299, 342, 452, 461, 466, **478**, 481
 and right effort, 259, 268
 delight in, 247
 foundation of, 247
 roots of, 135, 137, 167, 169, 207, 243, 270, 272, 283, 289, 290, **305**, 316, **325**, 337, **342**, **344**, 432, 437, 475, 525, **570**
 search for, 52, 54, 57, 64
 synonyms for, 84, 88, 163, 183, 189, 229, 306
 ten courses of, 305, **309**, **339**
 undermined by anger, 327, 344
wisdom, 61, 88, 130, 132, 137, 145, 158, 164, 177, 178, 190, **191**, 201, 229, 232, 253, 258, 261, **269**, 282, 291, 292, 338, **403**, 459, 509, 512, 523, 527, 570, **571**, *See* faculties, five spiritual; perfection of wisdom
 and awakening mind, 24
 and awakening to truth, 165
 and compassion, 24, 171, 221, 273, 290, 377, 446
 and conceptualisation, 178
 and defilements, 36, 134, 167, 168, 304, 349, 404
 and dependent arising, 411
 and ethical discipline, 404
 and faith, 262, 270
 and ignorance, 357, 404
 and intoxicating inclinations (*āsava/āśrava*), 371
 and investigation of states, 366
 and karma, 232, 241, 242, 244
 and meditation, **385**, 403, 409, 451
 and meditative absorption, 357, 378
 and method (*upāya*), 399
 and omniscience, 438
 and the three trainings, 21, 66, 137, **266**, **269**, 340, 403, *See* noble eightfold path
 and Truths of the Noble Ones, 76, 404, 405
 and wholesome/skilful states, 305
 eye of, 136, 304, 406, 427
 hindrances to, 351
 of Dhamma/Dharma-follower, 261
 of Sāriputta, 505, 506, 507, 508
 of solitary-buddhas, 170
 of women, 197
 seeds beyond existence and non-existence, 416
 sword of, 283, 534
 three kinds of, **403**, **450**
world-systems, 7, 14, 42, 45, 77, 133, 134, **225**, **239**, 288, 290, 316, 375, 446, 447, 474, 475, 476, 477, **571**
wrathful deities, 146, 148, 534
Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang), 28
*yakṣa*s, 166, 285, 324, 335, 469, **571**
Yamāntaka, 533, 534
Yasodharā, 9
Yogācāra school, 31, 34, 39, **439**, 534, 555, 568, 570, **571**, *See* Cittamātra
Zen school, 32, 33, 383, 501, 538, 554, *See* Chan
Zhiyi, 32, 379, 382

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